Defensative Armour,

Against Four of

SATHAN'S

MOST

Fiery Darts:

VIZ.

TEMPTATIONS

TO

Atheistical and Blasphemous Impressions and Thoughts, Self-Murther, Despair, and Presumption.

WHEREIN

Is Discoursed the *Nature* of these *Temptations*, the several *Tempters* to these Sins, the *Arguments* ordinarily used by the *Tempters* in the *inforcing of them*; and some *proper Advice* is offered to those who are exercised with them.

By *J. C.* D. D.

Maxima pars fallitur quod non credunt has cogitationes esse tentationes Sathanæ: Illæ ipsæ sunt tela ista ignita nequissimarum nequitiarum spiritualium in cœlestibus. Luther.

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TO THE

Christian Reader.

Reader,

IT is my *Experience* (after more than thirty years service of God in the work of the Ministry) that hath brought forth these meditations to thy view, in which time, I have been sent for to, and conversed with many, who have laboured under the *three first* of these *horrid temptations*, as to which this Discourse offers something of *Instruction* and *Counsel*, upon some of which they have had as sad issues as can well be imaginable; and to all (the first of them at least) hath been the most intollerable *burthen* and *affliction*, that a reasonable Soul is capable of bearing. This hath put me upon frequent studies, what to say or do for their relief. Who would not do his utmost, to lend an helping hand to a soul, crying out, *That it feeleth an Hell upon Earth!* to help a poor creature, *whose sleep departeth from him in the night*, and in the day time he can find no place to rest, but is uneasie in his or her greatest circumstances of ease; whom he seeth *trembling*, that he is not able to speak and continue a sentence to him to its period. This

I have seen, and mine Ears have heard. I have known some lying under one or other of these Temptations, *months* and *years*, and for a great part of the time under such a burthen, that they have passionately said, *They would heartily forgive any that would take away their lives*, and (which is most tremendous) for want of such an executioner, I have known some do it with their own hands. Under the greatest *circumstances* for *content* imaginably, blessed with a *competent estate*, acceptable relations, and wanting nothing but a *quiet mind*. O that it might be a warning to the *Athiests* and *Blasphemers* of this Generation. They know not how soon those *Atheistical and Blasphemous Thoughts and Expressions*, with which their hearts are filled, and which they make now the *Ornaments of their Speech*, may reflect to this degree upon them. I have observed in these distresses, persons nearly concerned in such as have been thus afflicted, at loss for some Discourse, purposely wrote upon these Arguments, which if they could not perswade their friends *in these paroxisms* to read, yet they might read to them, or at least from which they might be furnished with matter of proper discourse or counsel to them. This hath made me spend some few hours upon this Argument, which tho

it

it be not the general concern of Christians (they being through the Goodness of God, but few of many, that are incumbred with the three first of the Temptations here spoken to) yet in another sense are the general *concern of all*; none of us knowing which of us may not fall into these Temptations common to men: nor what friend or neighbour of ours may next stand in need of our help; and the most being at too great a loss, how properly to apply themselves to Christians under these circumstances. Indeed the last Temptation is of more *general concern*; we are all apt enough to receive temptations to *Presumption*. These considerations, together with my *observation*, that in these late years in which *Atheism* and *Blasphemy* have been so *rampant*, and profanely triumphing almost at the end of every loose and ungoverned Tongue; these Temptations have also been more frequent, hath made me willing to let these *Meditations* pass into a publick view, that they may be of more than a private use. I shall think my self abundantly rewarded for my pains, if but one Soul may be *fore-warned* or *relieved* by them, or any thing be said in these sheets, which any private Christians may make use of for a *word in season*, to any one Soul thus *wearied*. I

weigh not the scoffs of those who mock at these things; experience lets all that mind Religion know these Temptations are no *Chimæra's*, and those who judge them meer *Melancholick Delirations* and the *Effects* of them, know not what they say, but must say something, tho it be to discover their ignorance of the ways of *Divine Providence*, and no acquaintance with the *Methods of Sathan*. Such as these *Meditations* are, they are not intended for such as are *scoffers* at *wounded* and *troubled spirits*; but for a relief for those who feel such wounds, and in whose hearts the internal *Plow-man* hath made such *deep furrows*: and for those who know no Temptation of this nature hath befallen others, but such as are common to men, and wherewith they also may be Tempted. Having told thee my design (good *Reader!*) I commend thee to God and these Sheets, and thee, to the Blessing of his Grace

Thy faithful Servant in

the Gospel of our Lord,

J. C.

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Cour-

Courteous Reader,

THe Author living at a great distance from the Press, begs of thee pardon for lesser Errors, in misplacing Stops or Letters; and with thy Pen to correct the following

ERRATA'S:

IN page 6, line 28, read *think so*; p. 15, l. 29, r. *it is*; p. 22 l. 7, r. *scarce any*; p. 25 l. 7, blot out [*not*] p. 35, l. 2, Blot out [*it*] p. 64, l. 17, r. *Filiation*; p. 66, l. 2, r. *washed away*; p. 79 l. 3, r. *cause*; p. 93, l. 12, r. *hath brought*; p. 96 l. 4, r. *and Præterition*; p. 97, l. 27, blot out [*that*] p. 101, l. 28, for *about*; r. *of*; p. 113, l. 22, r. *of all*; p. 150, l. 27, r. *of Conscience*; p. 171, l. 2, r. *the Grave and Hell*; p. 176, l. 6, r. *who cannot understand*; p 177, l. 24, r. *therefore plain that*; p. 188, l. 7, r. *the Soul*; p. 210, l. 5, r. *some thinks*; p. 228, l. 23 r. *such Souls*; p. 234, l. 19, r. *our sins*; p. 241, l. 14, r. *violate them*; p. 261, l. 21, r. *as to*; p 306, l. 26, r. *in his heart*.

Concerning

TEMPTATIONS

TO

Atheistical and Blasphemous

THOUGHTS.

CHAP. I.

The true Notion of Atheistical *and* Blasphemous *Thoughts.* Blasphemy *committed three ways. Atheistical Thoughts* Transient *and* Volatile, *or more* Fixed *and* Permanent. *Those more Fixed, either* studied *by us, embraced, and improved, or else such as are the Souls* Burthen, Trouble *and* great Affliction. *The Discourse restrained to the last.*

David telleth us, *The Fool hath said in his heart, There's no God*; Psal. 14. v. 1. By the *Fool* is to be understood not the *Natural Fool* (hundered in

 the

the exercise of his Reason) but the *Spiritual Fool*, the Wicked Man; nor is there any, to whom the Notion of a *Fool* more properly agreeth, than to the *Presumptuous bold Sinner*, whether you by *Fool* understand one that wanteth *knowledge* and *wit*, or him that wanteth *wisdom* to *guide his knowledge* in exercise to the best ends of Humane Life: to *discern*, *chuse*, and *judge* of things according to truth and reality, and for the best advantage. This *Fool* (saith the *Psalmist*) *saith in his heart*, that is, he *thinks* and *believeth there is no God*; whatsoever he professeth with his lipps, these are his *inward thoughts*. The *Philosopher* distinguisheth betwixt our *inward* and more *external Speech*, we speak nothing with our *lipps*, but what we have first *said in our hearts*: though we say *much in our hearts*, which Shame, or *Moral Prudence*, *restraineth us from speaking with our lipps*: Every *wicked* man doth not speak it with his lipps, but he *saith in his heart*, he thinketh there is no God, and he *speaketh it* in his life; his actions speak it, he lives *without a God in the World*. Now this being the Character of a *wicked man*, one that is a *spiritual Fool*, the impressions of them upon honest souls, often proves a *sad temptation* to them; ushering in temptations to *Self-murther* and *De-*

spair

shair. This hath made me resolve shortly to handle this *Argument*, that I may by it give some *relief* to Souls thus *tormented*; and likewise help others with something to say to Souls under these *miserable circumstances.* I shall reduce the whole of my Discourse to these few Heads;

1. I shall shew you what I understand by *Atheistical* and *Blasphemous Thoughts*, and discourse shortly of the *kinds* and *differences* of them.

2. *We will inquire, what Tempters a Soul may have to them.*

3. *What Bait, or seeming good, the Tempter* can imaginably propound to the Soul to intice it to them.

4. *What Arguments Tempters may use with any colourable reason, to bring over a Soul to such a perswasion.*

5. We will inquire, *Whether all such kind of* Thoughts be the *Souls guilt*, or no, or *what are*, what *are not.*

6. Lastly, I *shall offer my best advice* both for *Souls not as yet under these circumstances*, for the Prevention of them; and for *Souls* under this *great pressure*, for the Arming and Supporting of them against and under them, and procuring them Liberty from them.

1. Qu. *What are those thoughts that deserve the name of Atheistical* and *Blasphemous?* The term *Atheisme* is taken sometimes more *strictly* for a *denyal of God*: sometimes more *largely* for a denyal of any of the *Perfections of God.* In the first Sense, for a man to think, *That there is no God*, or *that the Father*, the *Son*, or the *Holy Ghost*, is not God, is *Atheisme*; when it is onely a denial in the *Heart*, it is an *Atheistical Thought*, when we deny it with our *Lipps* they are *Atheistical words*: more *largely* for a man to deny Gods *Wisdom*, *Power*, *Knowledg*, *Mercy*, or any other of his Perfections, is *Atheisme*. *Blasphemy* is committed three ways. 1. By denial of the *Perfections that are in God.* If any shall deny God to be one in *Essence*, or the three *Persons in the God-head*, or that God is a *Spirit Omnipotent*, *Omnisufficient*, &c. is *Blasphemy*: It is an evil and injurious speaking of God. 2. *When the Divine Perfections are attributed to the Creature*, such I mean as belong to God onely, as to think any Creature *Infinite*, *Omnipotent*, *Eternal*, *Omnisufficient*, &c. 3. *When the Imperfections of Creatures are ascribed to God*; as if any *thinketh in his heart*, That *God is mortal*, that he is the *Author* or Countenancer of *Sin*, or any thing of like nature which agrees to the Crea-

Creature, onely in regard of the imperfection of it. Thus you see there may be a *great variety* of *Atheistical* and *Blasphemous Thoughts*, according to the variety of the *Object*, which may be the *Being of God*, or the *Perfections of God*, &c.

Again, Such kind of Thoughts when they are *fixed* and *permanent*, are either *studied up by us*, *hugg'd*, and *imbraced*, and inlarged upon, so as the Soul studies to feed them and maintain them; which are hardly found in any but *Atheistical Souls*, that find it their interest to secure their lusts, by such *principles*: Or else they are the *Souls trouble* and *burthen*, and great *afflictions*; like a Viper sticking to their hands, and there 'twill stick. They cry out and roar, and endeavour to shake these thoughts off, but they recurr, and are like an ill sounding noise in their ears, and inconceivably afflict them: They say, *Get thee behind me Satan*, but he will not be gone. They cry to God, but he is pleased not to take the thorn out of their souls. These are *Temptations*, and they are *Atheistical* and *Blasphemous Thoughts*, thus circumstanced, that I now design to speak something to: So that I exclude out of my Discourse,

1. More transient and *volatile*, *Atheistical*, and *Blasphemous Thoughts*. The *wise*, the

ſpiritually wiſe and good man, may have ſome of theſe; God is a *Spiritual Being*, and ſo removed from the cognizance of our Senſes. *Who hath ſeen his ſhape* at any time? And the *Infiniteneſs* of his *Being* and *Perfections*, is ſo much beyond the *ſpan* or *fathom* of our *Reaſon*, that the *beſt of men* have their doubts ſometimes about the *Divine Being* and *Perfections*; which indeed taking their Notions of God from Scripture, they chide away, are humbled for them, ſuffer them not to abide with them; and endeavour to eſtabliſh their ſouls againſt them, by teſtimonies of Scripture, which they firmly believe, and make the only Rule of their Faith, and Director of their apprehenſions concerning God. 2. I alſo exclude from my Diſcourſe ſuch *permanent fixed thoughts of Atheiſm and Blaſphemy*, as breed in the Soul, and the Soul *delighteth in*, is well pleaſed with, ſtudies to *fortifie* and make good by *Argument*. For theſe are only found in *Atheiſts*, who are either ſuch *avowedly* and *profeſſedly*, and are not aſhamed by the words of their lips to declare that ſuperfluity of vileneſs that is in their hearts. Or elſe they are ſuch, *as in heart thinketh ſo*, though in words they profeſs otherwiſe: Such as the Apoſtle ſpeaketh of, *Tit.* 1. 16. Who *profeſs*

fess that they know God, but do in *works deny him*, *being abominable, disobedient, and to every good work reprobate.* I shall very little concern my self as to either of these; only consider what may be said as to those who have such *impressions*, but they are their intollerable *burthen* and *affliction.* Indeed they are rather to be called *impressions*, than *thoughts*; and let us first inquire into this bitter stream, from what *source* and *fountain* it floweth.

CHAP. II.

From whence Atheistical *and* Blasphemous Thoughts *may proceed*; *sometimes from* Lust, *sometimes from the* World; *but these are usually imbraced and nursed up in the* Soul. *Those that are the Subject of the present Discourse, ordinarily proceed from the* Devil, *as a* Tempter *and a* Blasphemous Spirit.

THE Adversaries of a Christian, with whom the *good fight* is to be managed, are usually reckoned to be, *The Flesh, the*

World, and the *Devil*; their *Oppoſition* to us, is by *moving*, *inticing*, and *perſwading us* to ſin, to the ruin of our Souls. Hence Divines diſtinguiſhing *Temptations*, from their *Efficient Cauſe* or Cauſes, ſay, There is *Tentatio a Carne*, a Temptation from the *Fleſh*; which agreeth with St. *James*, *Every man is tempted when he is drawn away by his own* LUST and *inticed*: but that muſt be underſtood of ſuch *Temptations* by which a man is *conquered*.

2. There is *Tentatio ab hoſte*, a Temptation from the *Enemy* without, and this is either from the *World*, that is the *Things* or *Men* of the *World*: Or from the *Devil*. Any of theſe may be *Tempters* in this Caſe.

1. *Luſt may be a Tempter to Atheiſtical and Blaſphemous Thoughts*, though I muſt confeſs I cannot underſtand how that ſhould be a *tempter* to ſuch Thoughts as theſe, not by us *choſen*, *ſtudied*, or *delighted in by them*. Debaucht Wretches, that give up themſelves to *Drunkenneſs*, *Whoredom*, *Lying*, *Curſing*, *Swearing*, Neglect of all Duty to God and Man, are concern'd, if they can, to perſwade themſelves, *That there is no God that ſeeth them* or *d approveth them*, or that hath a ſuperiour power to them, or will *judge* or *condemn* them; for did they believe this, their

their Conſciences would never let them be quiet. Now that luſt [that Sinful deſire] which is in them to keep their luſts without regrets of Conſcience or any ſowre Reflections, after their Debaucheries, may *be* a *Tempter* to them to ſay in their hearts, yea, and to imbrace a perſwaſion in their hearts, *That there is no God*; but this doth not properly concern our preſent Caſe.

2. The *World* alſo, [the men of the world] may be *Tempters* to ſuch thoughts as theſe. The diſcourſes of others you know offer matter for our thoughts to run upon, and as in other cauſes, ſo in this, there may be ſome who may argue *Atheiſm* and *Blaſphemy* with us, and who may endeavour to perſwade us to ſuch Sentiments. *Atheiſtical* and *Blaſphemous* Books may ſet our thoughts on work, but theſe can have no great *cauſation* in ſuch thoughts as are *permanent*, *afflictive*, and *troubleſome* to us. It is in the power of Chriſtians to avoid *Atheiſtical* and *Blaſphemous company*; and to abſtain from reading of ſuch Books: Though therefore men of the world may be *Tempters* to *Atheiſm*, yet they can hardly be charged as *Tempters* in this Caſe.

3. The *Devil* (whom you know the Scriptures call the *Tempter*) the *Enemy*, the

the *Envious one*) is doubtleſs the *principal Efficient cauſe.* He *goeth about*, like a roaring Lion, *ſeeking whom he may devour*, and he hath many *Arts*, and *Wiles*, and *Depths*, and *Methods*, which he uſeth to deſtroy Souls with; amongſt which this is one, to make impreſſions of *Atheiſm* and *Blaſphemy* upon perſons; by ſome they are imbraced as Notions that are ſuited to their Senſual Appetite, and which will very well fit their Carnal Deſires: By others they are diſguſted, as contrary to thoſe Impreſſions which the *Holy Spirit* of God hath made upon their Souls, and their former Notions, Apprehenſions, and Belief in God. Yea, ſo far diſguſted, that their Souls are frighted at the ſight of theſe Strangers comming to their Houſe; and are amazed which way they ſhould ever come in, having to their knowledg never opened the leaſt *Window* or *Door* to them, nor any way invited them ſo much as for an hour or a moment; their Souls loath and abhor them, and yet they revive upon them. *Temptations* of this nature thus circumſtanced, can be from no other *Tempter* than the *Devil.*

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

No seeming good *propounded to* such Souls *as are thus* Tempted, *to whom the* Temptations *are* Afflictive. *Nor doth the* Tempter *always use Arguments, not so much hoping to prevail with such souls, as to trouble them to that degree, as to put them upon* destroying themselves. *To others he useth Arguments, From the* No Evidence of the Divine Being to our Sense: *The* Incomprehensibleness of it, and *the* Perfections *of it by our* Reason: *The* many Disorders which the Divine Wisdom *thinketh fit to* permit in the World. *These are the usual* Topicks *of* Tempters *that tempt souls unto* Atheisme.

EVery Man when he is tempted is drawn away by his own Lust and enticed, saith St. *James* (1 *Jam.*) He is *enticed* by

by some glimmerings of good, and so he is drawn away; but it is vain for us to enquire what *seeming good* enticeth a Soul, who looketh upon his *motions* and *solicitations*, and the things to which the Soul is so solicited, as the *greatest Evils* in the world. St. *James* therefore is there speaking not of *Temptations* in the general, but of such *Temptations* as flow and proceed from our *innate Lust*: There must in all *Temptations* of that nature, be a *Bait* upon which the *Lust* in our hearts may feed; and tho it be not necessary that that *Bait* be a *real Good*, yet it must have some appearance of good in it; for the principles of Humane Nature will not allow it to move into the Embraces of any thing which it apprehendeth Evil; but this is not necessary in *Temptations* which flow solely from the Devil: the eternal ruin of the Soul is the Design of that *Envious One*, and it is all one whether he can *affright* or intice the Soul into Hell, whether he can destroy it by *Poison* or by a more certain *Stabb*. It may be more worthy our Enquiry, what *Arguments* the *Devil* can possibly use with a Soul so far prejudiced against *impressions* of this nature, that he can hope should prevail with it to receive any such impres-

impressions: For the Soul of Man being a *rational being*, is not like, without something of *Reason*, or a *shew of it*, to be brought over to agree to any such impression.

1. What if we should say that possibly the *Tempter promiseth himself no such success*, what if his design be not to proselyte a Religious Soul to the Proposition which is contrived in his Suggestion, but meerly to weary the Christian out of his life by the constant trouble of his importunity; and indeed I believe that *generally* so it is, and that these are but preparative Temptations to *Self-murther* and Despair, if he cannot by these Suggestions perswade the Soul to *blaspheme God*, or to deny Gods Infinite Being and Perfections; yet if he can but stir up in the Soul such a degree of *Impatience*, under this sore affliction, as will put the man upon determining his own life deliberately, he hath done his work. Hence it is that in all the Course of my Ministry I never observed Man or Woman long under these Temptations, but they fell into Temptations of the later Nature; which I the rather hint to you, that you may watch upon, and pray for persons, who are brought under these most sad and dismal circum-

circumſtances. They are ordinary *Præludiums* and *Prologues* to ſuch *Tragedies*, and in this caſe he is not much concerned to bring Arguments before the Soul, it is to be deſtroyed another way.

2. But indeed as to other Souls, to whom theſe *Temptations* are not *Afflictions*, but meer Diverſions and *Recreations*, he muſt uſe *Arguments*, and he may offer them even to Pious and *Religious Souls*, how little ſoever they avail. The Arguments cannot be many which can be brought in ſuch a Cauſe. They are uſually brought from one of theſe three Heads:

1. *From the want of the Evidence of Senſe to prove a Divine Being.* Spiritual Beings are in this diſtinguiſhed from thoſe that are bodily, that having no *Accidents*, no Qualities, ſuch as Colour, or the like; they are not evident to our *External Senſes.* God is called the *Inviſible* and who (ſaith the Holy Ghoſt) *hath ſeen God at any time?* Indeed no Spiritual being can be ſeen, who ever ſaw the *Soul* of a Man, or an *Angel* (unleſs in an aſſumed Shape) and I look upon the queſtioning of any ſuch beings, as *Spirits*, in our age, a fair Argument of the Atheiſme that is in thoſe *Philoſophers* Hearts.

Yet

Yet are we Creatures so much made up of *Flesh and Blood*, that we are hard to believe any thing but what we see; that is indeed to believe any thing at all: for seeing and believing are two things very diverse one from another. *Who ever saw God* (saith the Devil) or who at any time hath heard his Voice, *&c?* But this is an Argument fit only for Sensual Brutes, and not for any deliberate Soul to be catched by.

2. He will, therefore (Secondly) argue from *Reason*, which is not able by *searching to find out God unto perfection.* It is usually said, *Animal nihil plus Animali sapit. That a living creature knows nothing beyond a living creature of its own size and perfection.* Upon this account it is reasonably said, That if a *brute Creature* could describe a Man, it would describe him as a *Brute*, not being able to conceive of a Creature beyond its degree of Perfection. It is easie for a man, if he will but make use of his own reason, to conclude that there must be a *God*, a First Being, and a First Cause; for that nothing can give a being to, or be the first cause of it self, is a principle so connatural unto us, as we cannot out-face it, nor by our highest debauchery is extinguisht; but however the *First Being* should give

give a being to it ſelf, or the *Firſt Cauſe* be its *own cauſe*, this is very hard to conceive, until the Soul be aſſiſted by a Divine Light. And the *Divine Being* being ſo far tranſcendent in its *perfections* to all the *perfections* that are found in the greateſt and wiſeſt of the Sons of Men, it is yet harder to conceive of it aright and not to *blaſpheme* it in our thoughts: We are Creatures that are *Limited by Time*, *Circumſcribed by Air* and *Certain Meaſures*, and it is very hard to us to conceive that there ſhould be a Being without theſe boundaries, The *Immenſity*, *Omnipotence*, *Omniſcience*, *Infiniteneſs* of any Being, are things tranſcending the reach of our Conceptions, and tho we can by Reaſon argue our ſelves ſometimes into an appearing neceſſity of theſe Aſſertions, yet we can hardly give credit to the Eyes of our Minds, they are perfections beyond our graſp. Hence the Great Wits of the World are generally Atheiſtical, and it ſeems almoſt neceſſary that men ſhould be *fools, that they might be wiſe*: Hence is the *Socinians* denial of the Trinity, and others denial of Gods *Omniſcience*, &c. This gives the Devil a great advantage, putting the Soul upon reflections, *How*

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can these things be? Luther saith *Non amo hos Curiosos & Quærentes* (he might have said *Quomodistas* too) *Audi Verbum Dei & tace.* I do not love these Inquirers in Divine things. *Why so*, or *Wherefore*, or *How are those things? Hear the Word of God, and hold thy peace.*

3. A Third *Argument* that Satan ordinarily useth in these *Temptations*, *is from the seeming disorders* and *confusions which the Wisdom of Divine Providence permits in the World.* Were there a God (saith the *Devil*) and were he *such a God* as thou fanciest, would he suffer his Enemies so to prosper, and his Servants to be so trampled upon? This is an Argument which our own feeble Reason, in compliance with our Lusts, doth often trouble us with; even *David*, *Jeremy*, and *Habakkuk*, were molested with it. As we are naturally prone to measure the *Almighty's Power* by the strength of our created *Arms*, and his *Omniscience* by the Fathom of our *pitiful Comprehensions*, and his *Eternity* by the Span of our own *Duration*; so we are as prone to determine concerning his *Wisdom* by our *Policies*. We cannot see to the bottom of his depths, nor look up to the top of his heights,

but judge of the *Infinite Wise God*, as if we were to determine concerning a shallow Politician amongst men; so that whether the Argument be conclusive or no (which doubtless it is not) yet it is good enough for the Devil to trouble us with, to tell us, That if indeed there were a God, and such a God as we have heard of, *Abel* should not have perished by the hands of a bloody *Cain*, nor the *Israelites* been oppressed by such a one as *Pharaoh*; nor *Job* put to scrape himself with a pot-sheard. The wicked should not walk on every side, nor the vilest men be exalted. It should not happen to the righteous after the manner of the wicked, nor yet to the wicked according to the desert of the righteous; nothing but *blind Fortune* could shut its Eyes and wink at such disorders. These now are the greatest advantages which I can fancy the Devil to have upon any Soul, to induce it to think there is no God, or at least no such God as the Scripture speaks of, and we ordinarily preach to you; and persons solicited to such a belief, will find some such thoughts as these ordinarily either prævious to or concomitant with the other. But as I said before, in such cases as I am speaking to, he seldom

seldom useth much argument, little hopeing to work over the Soul into such a belief, onely designing to give it trouble, in order to a further end: And this is enough to have spoken to this Question, both concerning the want of a bait that should intice the Soul into this Net, and the *Arguments* which the *Tempter* ordinarily useth with Such Souls.

CHAP. IV.

Whether these Suggestions be the Souls guilt yea or no? Two Conclusions laid down in the Case. The Negative is asserted. Five Arguments brought to prove that they are not the Souls guilt. Two things which may stumble the Soul in this thing. Some things offered for its relief under them both.

IT is yet a more valuable question, *Whether these Thoughts* or *Impressions be the Souls guilt* yea *or no?* This is the more considerable, because if upon a due

inquiry they prove not so, this is the best *Topick* to relieve a Soul from. I shall therefore a little inlarge my Discourse here. I shall in the first place grant, *That all temptations of this nature had their foundation in Mans Guilt*: And *as to particular Souls now existent in Bodies*; *they may have had their advantages from their particular Actual Guilt*. I say first, All Temptations of this Nature have their foundation in the *Original Guilt* of *Humane Nature*; as in *Adam* all sinned. Had not the Serpent first *beguiled Eve* in the State of *Innocence*, we had not possibly been exposed to such *Suggestions*, or at least not to such *Impressions* from them; we might have had them, but they had not bin so wounding to us: The Infernal Plow-man might have plowed, but he had not made such long Furrows: by these *Suggestions* in our Souls he had but led this Plough upon a Rock, and attempted us with them as vainly as he did our Saviour. While our first *Parents* were in their Estate of *Innocency*, the Devil assaulted them with a *Temptation* of this *Nature*; Gen. 3. 1, 2, 3. He did not attempt to perswade the Woman, *That there was no God*, (Our first *Parents* were too lately come out of their Creators hands, to be perswaded,

swaded, That there was no Supreme Being precedent to them) but he designed to beget in them blasphemous and most unworthy thoughts of God. That he had deceived them, and not told them the Truth, when he said to them, *That in the day they did eat of the fruit of the Tree of Good and Evil, they should die*; and that by it he designed to deprive them of a very great part of their happiness: which makes it evident that Man even in his most perfect State, was capable of such Suggestions. How far the posterity of *Adam* should have been troubled with this guest, had *Eve* at first shut him out of doors; we cannot tell. Christ himself heard something of this Noise in the Wilderness, *Matth* 4. But with this difference, 1. *That he had not a Power to embrace such Motions*, they could not be impressive upon him, who was the *Express Image of his Fathers Person*, and God *Equal with his Father over all, blessed for Ever*; nor could they any way torment him, or be afflictive to him. He had a perfect power to repel them, without the least *Affliction* or Disturbance unto himself. *Adam* had a Passive Capacity to receive these *Fiery Darts*, to give credit to these *Vile Suggestions*, and to sin

by occasion of them; and the Children of *Adam* have not onely a *Passive Capacity* to receive such *Impressions*, but an *Active Power* and *Capacity*; yea, possibly more than so, an *Inclination* and *Propension* to feed upon them, to their defilement: and possibly there are scare any Souls in the World, which at one time or other have not been defiled with them, either before or after *Conversion*, though in very *different degrees*. In some they have been more *transient* and *volatile*, in others more *fixed* and *permanent*. In some Souls they been entertained as *Guests*, and as it were *adopted* into their Family, to others they have been but as *violent knockings and rappings at the doors*, or like the throwing in of Stones at the Windows, which the Master of the House could not help. Further yet, as to *particular Souls* troubled with them, they may for ought I know have bin *occasioned* by, or *advantaged from*, those Souls former guilt.

I say *occasioned* from it. God by his Righteous Judgment suffering the *Devil to stand at Peoples Right-hand in a just Punishment of them*, for their not studying to be *Rooted*, and *Grounded in the Faith*, for their *Desultory Levity*, and *Incertainty* in the things of God; or some other Sins.

Sins. They may be *Advantaged from some former Guilt*, when Persons have formerly allowed themselves to *read* Prophane and Atheistical Books, to listen unto, and hear profane and *Atheistical Discourses*, to Feed upon *Atheistical Arguments*, &c. But this is not the Question.

Secondly therefore, I conclude: That such *Motions* and *Impressions* (or if you will so call them) Thoughts, as are received with Horrour and Trouble, and Trembling, and are not delighted in, but rejected by the Soul, I say, *Thoughts thus circumstanced, let them have never so much Atheism* and *Blasphemy* in *them, are not the Guilt of that Soul that feeleth the Load and Burthen of them.* Now this being so great, if not the onely thing, that can successfully be spoken for the *Relief of Souls* under them; I shall endeavour to justify this *Conclusion* by some following Arguments.

1. My first shall be *from the Received Opinion of Divines: That the* very *first Motions to Sins are not Sins.* Every man may observe in his Soul a threefold *Motion* towards a sinful Act: 1. There is a Motion which is called *Primo Primus*, the very first; and indeed is not the *Motion of the Soul*, but a Motion to the Soul, a *Forreign* not a *Domestick intrinsick* Motion, but

from the *Devil* or the Men of the World. The Second is attended with some inward *Delight* and *Pleasure*. When there is not only a *Motion* made to the Soul to do something that is Evil, but it causeth some *Ticklings* and *Pleasure* in the Soul. Tho possibly the Soul as yet resolves not on it, nor desireth the producing of it into Act, yet it is pleased with it, and the Motion is sweet to its Taste. This is what *Divines* call *Concupiscence*, what the Scripture calleth *Lust*, and is doubtless *Sinful*, and forbidden in the *Tenth Commandement*; without which the Apostle saith he had not known it to be Sin: *Rom.* 7. 7. The Third is, That *Motion* by which the Soul moveth towards the *Actual Commission of it*, resolving upon it, contriving how to bring it about; *&c.* This is forbidden in every Commandement, which according to our Saviours Interpretation of the *Decalogue*, doth not only restrain and prohibit the overt Act, but all the inward Motions of the Heart, tendent and leading to such Act: but the first is prohibited in no Command.

2. Nor indeed is it reasonable for any to fancy that it should; *for it is not reasonable to imagine that God should forbid us Acts that are not our Acts.* Motions of this Nature

Nature are not our Actions, we are only the *Objects of them*, not the *Agents* in them. When God forbiddeth us Sin, he forbiddeth us not to *omit* something which he hath Commanded us to do, or to forbear something which he requireth us not to avoid. He doth not forbid us the *Actions of others, which we cannot prevent.* Suggestions and Impressions of this Nature are the meer Actions of others, to which we no way concurr. What are not our Acts cannot be our Sins.

3. Thirdly, I argue from the Words of our Saviour, *Matth.* 15. 11. *Not that which goeth into a Man defileth a Man; but that which cometh out of a Man, that defileth a Man:* and to the same purpose, *Mar.* 7. 20. *Are you so without Understanding also? Do you not perceive, that whatsoever from without entreth into a Man, it cannot defile him; because it entreth not into his Heart:* v. 20. *And he said, that which cometh out of the Man, that defileth the Man; for from within, out of the Heart of Man, proceed Evil Thoughts, Adulteries, Fornications, Murthers, Thefts, Covetousness, Wickedness, Deceit, Lasciviousness, an Evil Eye, Blasphemy, Pride, Foolishness; all these Evil things come from within, and defile the Man.* I know

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our Saviour is there discourſing, relating to the Phariſaical Superſticious Conceit of Mens being Defiled by *Eating with unwaſhen hands.* But this Diſcourſe led him to lay down ſome General Maxims of unqueſtionable Truth.

1. *That* that *which meerly entreth into a Man* from *without*, *cannot defile him.*

2. *That what defileth a Man, muſt be ſomething of his own, ſomething which cometh out of himſelf.* His Deſtruction muſt be from himſelf.

3. *That amongſt theſe things may be Evil Thoughts, for they proceed from the Heart*; v. 21.

4. *That what proceedeth not from the Heart, cannot Defile.* Let me now a little Apply this to the preſent purpoſe: *Atheiſtical* and Blaſphemous Thoughts thus Circumſtanced, do *meerly Enter into us from without*; we ſuppoſe the Soul not to contrive and breed them, not to ſtudy and delight in them: They are in a Senſe *within a Man*, the Soul hears the Noiſe, feels the Impreſſion of them, but they Enter *from without*, from an *Agent* that is without the Man. Secondly, They are not a *Mans own*, he doth not Hugg or Imbrace them, or Feed upon them; they are but as Baſtards laid at his Door, not born in his Houſe,

not

not bred of his own Soul. Thirdly, Though they be *Evil Thoughts*, yet they proceed *not from the Heart*. A Mans *Imaginative Power* relates to his *Sensitive Part*, his *Understanding* is but the *Out-room* of his Soul: Thus far indeed these *Evil Thoughts* enter into a Man, they make some Impressions upon his *Power of Imagination*; that is an *Open Faculty*, to which a Man hath no Lock or Barr, so long as there are Sensible Objects, or Sinful Agents in the World, they will have some Passage into this Entry of the Soul of Man. The *Understanding*, which is the *Porter to* the *Heart*, takes some Cognizance of all Passengers into it, so as a Man may have some *Notions* and take some *Cognizance*, and make some *Judgment* of these *Evil Thoughts*; but yet they are not come into the *Heart*, which is the *Will of Man*: here they come not, out of this they proceed not, they are not *willed*, nor *chosen*, they are not loved nor delighted in, the Soul melts not in any imbraces of them, but is scared at the sight of them; abominateth, rejecteth and abhorreth them. So as these things *proceed not out of the Heart* nor indeed were ever admitted into the Heart.

4. *Fourthly*,

4. *Fourthly*, If these were the Souls Guilt, how shall we excuse our Saviour from *Guilt*, or *Eve* before she yielded to the *Tempter*, or *Joseph*, though he resisted the Motion of his Mistriss. Our Saviour was made like unto us in all things (*Sin only excepted*) but how shall he be excused from Guilt, if *Satans* troublesome Motions to him were a Guilt? The Devil tempted him, though not to things of this Nature, yet to sinful Acts, to *distrust* the *Providence of God*, to *destroy himself*, &c. He received his Suggestions with detestation and abhorrence, he said to him, *Get thee behind me Satan.* The Devil was Guilty by his Motions, but no Guilt clave to our Saviour, rejecting and abominating his Motions. It is true, he did not receive them with that Passion, that *Horrour* and *Trembling* which Pious Men oft do, but that only speaks him freed from that *Passion* and *Weakness* under which we labour. Again, Who will say that *Eve*, our First Parent, sinned, by hearing the *Serpent* speak to her, before *she saw the Tree was Good for Food, and that it was Pleasant to the Eyes, and a Tree to be desired to make one Wise: And took of the Fruit thereof, and did Eat?* Who will say, That *Joseph's* Mistriss, soliciting him to lie with her,

her, was his Guilt? *She cast her Eyes upon him, she said, Lie with me.* But he refused, as you read; he said, *How shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?* Neither was this a single but repeated Motion: She was Importunate with him. The Text saith, *Gen.* 39.10. *That she spake to him day by day*, but the Text also saith, *That he hearkned not unto her to lie by her, or to be with her*; and not doing this, *Joseph* doubtless was not *Guilty*. The case is much the same with thee, the Tempter hath said unto thee, *Do not believe there is a God*, or a *Christ*, or that he *ever was made Man*, or *died for the sins of man*; or that God is such a one, so *Just*, so *Omniscient*, *&c.* And thus he talks to thee *day by day*, but thou hearkenest not to the Tempter, thou wilt not so much as *parly* with, or *deliberate* upon them, much less give credit unto them; how art thou in this more Guilty than *Joseph*? Tho thy Tempter dealeth with thee more secretly by Impressions on thy Spirit, his, more *externally* by *Audible Words*; and thy Temptation be to a more *Spiritual*, his to a more *Fleshly* Wickedness, yet this *Act* is not more, if so much as his.

5. Lastly, I argue from that known Maxime in Divinity, *Omne peccatum est volun-*

voluntarium. All sin must be voluntary: It is most certainly true of *Actual Sin*: It is also true of *Original Sin.* The Sin of *Adam*, which was *Peccatum Originans*, was voluntary, and we all in him voluntarily hearkened to the *Serpent*, and had our Hands, all our Hands in *Eves* Hand, which she reached up to pluck of the Fruit of that Tree. And for the *Original* Corruption and depravation of our Natures, it was but consequent to that, and so contracted voluntarily. But Actual Sin must apparently be voluntary, for an *involuntary Action* is no *humane Action.* Now in this case here is nothing of the Will, the poor Creature cries, *Get thee behind me Satan:* It would not hear such a Noise, nor entertain such a Thought, it trembleth at the fears of the returns of them. I have seen one my self in such an Agony at but the fears of the return of them, that I have thought every Limb of him shaked, and trembled: I have heard another, that had recovered once from these violences, hearing me Discourse of them, say; *O Sir it is an Hell upon the Earth.* (And these are but two Instances of diverse I could name) so that apparently here is nothing of the Will imbracing and chusing these things, nothing of the

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Affections, *desiring*, *loving*, *delighting* in such Thoughts: so as they cannot be the Souls defilement and guilt, tho they indeed be its most insupportable Burthen and Affliction. This is to me so plain, that I can hardly conceive upon what mistake a Soul under this intollerable Burden, should charge it self with Guilt, with reference to these Thoughts: Yet two things it may possibly say,

1. *That it is hard to conceive that the Tempter, following this poor Soul from day to day, but that it should have so far deliberated upon, or consented unto such Thoughts, as to be rendred Guilty before God.*

2. *That by giving Ear to some Atheistical Discourses, or by Reading some Blasphemous and Atheistical Books, or it may be, Entertaining some such Atheistical Thoughts formerly, and Arguing within it self for them, it is become Guilty; and now God doth but Righteously punish it with them.*

To both which I shall oppose but two things,

1. That as to the first it must be determined by the Soul, that is under these Impressions, they troubling it from day to day, month to month, and it may be year to year; whether it hath not at all

all, in any degree, deliberated upon them, consented and agreed so far to them, as to make it Guilty in some degree; and indeed it is hard to conceive, that in this thing the Soul should be wholly and intirely Innocent: but admit it be not, yet surely these are no other *Spots then what may be found in the Faces of Gods dearest Children*, no other then *Sins of Infirmity*, and *Humane Frailty*; and such as in other cases, the best of Men and Women daily incurr the Guilt of: which upon our daily *Confession and Repentance of*, a Soul may warrantably expect Gods Pardon for, through the Blood of Jesus Christ, and so ought not to ly so heavy upon the Soul.

2. Secondly, Admit that the Soul, before its turning unto God, may have given too much occasion and advantage to the Tempter to offer those Impressions; and that these are but *youthful vanities* repeated to us by the *Tempter*: yet certainly the Souls present *abhorrence* and *detestation* of them, its present *trembling*, and *trouble*, at the *repetition* of them, *ought to be a far greater comfort and relief to the Soul, than the repetition of them ought to be trouble*, or *disturbance*. Thou heretofore had'st such Thoughts, but then they did not trouble thee, thou didst entertain and cherish them;

them: now the repetition of them makes thee weary of thy Life, are the greatest burden that thou didd'st ever feel: What is here to disturb thee? If thou indeed didd'st delight to roll over those Follies, former Follies in thy Thoughts, if thy Soul allowed them its close embraces and pleasure, this were something formidable; but while thy Soul abhorreth, detesteth them, while with all thy might, thou repellest them; it is a sign God hath both pardoned thy former Guilt, as to them, and also renewed and changed thy Heart; then which nothing can speak better for thee.

So that if we wisely consider it, we shall find, That admit a Christian under these disturbances, can justly check himself, for too free an Admission of such Thoughts formerly, yet his present Affliction for them, abhorrence, and detestation of them, speaks comfort, not trouble to him; and from this Discourse it may easily be concluded, *That the great Torments and Disturbances of Souls upon this account, are generally groundless.* The Souls which shall Account unto God another day for *Atheistical and Blasphemous Thoughts*, are generally such as *never made any complaint of them.* A Man never feels the Eternal Wrath of God

in another Life, for those sins, the burden of which he hath felt in this Life, and the Guilt of which he hath been truly afraid of, and trembled at and studied to avoid: Much less for *the sinful acts of another, to which he hath not consented.* This is a thing so obvious, that one would wonder that any thing of this nature should stick with an Intelligent Christian, or with any Soul that is but indifferently acquainted with the *Covenant of Grace* and the Promises of the Gospel. *Hast thou formerly been Guilty of some Atheistical Blasphemous Thoughts, which for a time thou entertainedst without any just regret?* Or hast thou not made so quick and ready an Opposition to them as thou oughtest, yet thou hast a Promise, *Matth.* 12. 31. *All Sin and Blasphemy wherewith a man shall blaspheme, shall be forgiven unto Men.* To what men thinkest thou? What to them that persist in them, and study to maintain them, or to those that *repent of them?* Thou wilt certainly say to the later, not to the former. Why art thou then thus unreasonably disturbed? Thou hearest that even for this Guilt, there is *a Balm in Gilead, there is a Physician there.* Doest thou say, Ah but I do not repent? What doest thou understand

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by Repentance? Is it not an *hearty* Trouble for them, an hearty Loathing and Detestation of them, a Trembling at the very remote Thoughts of them, an hearty desire to be rid of them; and to entertain them no more: Repentance? What is Repentance then? With what Imaginable colour of Reason or Pretence of Scripture, canst thou charge thy self with the Guilt of that Sin which thou truly Loatheſt, Abhorreſt, Trembleſt at, Studieſt to avoid. And indeed this *Temptation* hath apeared to me; sometimes converſing with Souls in their Diſtreſs, one of the moſt *Inaccountable Things in the World*, as to the causes of it; especially when this *Diſturbance* hath fallen upon Intelligent Souls, acquainted with the Goſpel and the Terms of the Covenant of Grace. For whereas the Devil uſeth this ordinarily but as a prævious Temptation, to enforce another to *Self Murther* or *habituated Deſpair*, one would wonder that any ſuch *Suggeſtions* as theſe, no better entertained, could poſſibly induce the Soul to thoſe other Sins: but ſo it is, upon Experience we find it, that theſe are oft times moſt unſpeakable diſturbances. It will be therefore worth our while, in the laſt place to

consider what may be done, by, or for our Souls, yet at Liberty, to prevent these great incumbrances of our Peace; as also for the Relief of those Souls, who (through the permission of a Wise God) are fallen under such a tremendous Providence as this is: and this is my last Work.

CHAP. V.

Christians under these Temptations, advised, To fix upon this, That they are not the Souls guilt. Luther's Advice in the Case. 2. To possess it self with true Notions *of God from Scripture, avoiding the taking such Notions from Sense or Reason. Three advantages from that. This one,* 3. *Not to forbear Reading, and Hearing the Word.* 4. *Avoiding the Company of Blasphemers and Atheists, or reading their Books.* 5. *To take all lawful Diversions.* 6. To be much in the company of

of good Christians. 7. *To give such Thoughts no entertainment.* 8. *To be much in Fasting and Prayer.*

HEre are two things: 1. *What may be done for Prevention.* 2. *What for a present Support* and Relief; but they may both be spoken to with the same breath: for the same *Directions*, which are proper for the prevention of them, when remote from us, will also be found useful for the Support and Consolation of a Christian groaning under the burthen of them.

1. *The first thing to be done, is for to perswade the Soul, or for the Soul to prepossess or perswade it self, That these impressions lay it under no guilt before God*, and do not render it unlovely in the sight of God. *Luther* was an eminent Servant of God, much himself exercised with temptations and much conversing with those who were so exercised; It is said of him that he was wont to say, That the three things which made a *Divine*, were *Temptation*, *Meditation* and *Prayer*. In his Commentary upon *Psal.* 90. he takes special notice of this *Temptation* to *Atheistical* and

Blaſphemous Thoughts, I cannot direct you better than in the words of that great Man of God.

"It often hapeneth (*Luth.* c. 4. p. 434 "*Jen. in Pſal.* 90. 1.) ſaith he, and I have "ſeen it in many, that when they have "diſcerned themſelves exerciſed with "theſe thoughts, they have been as men "without life: There is therefore a ne- "ceſſity they ſhould be governed; and "the True Government of them is this, "*Ut ſtatuas te non ideo eſſe a Deo abjectum* "*quod iſta ſentis*, for you to determine "that you are not rejected of God becauſe "of them; for altho there be ſome cauſe "of them in us, and they are the fruits of "*Original Sin*, yet they are much promo- "ted and augmented by the Tempter the "Devil. For it often happeneth that the "Soul ſincerely and paſſionately deſires to "be delivered from them, but it cannot: "there, ſaith he, this advice is to be fol- "lowed, That the Soul do not, becauſe of "them, deſpair. 2. That it oppoſe ſuch "thoughts what it can poſſibly, and not ap- "prove, nor indulge them —— For, "ſaith he, theſe thoughts are not therefore "ſent, for you to judge your ſelf from "them; but that you may oppoſe and "withſtand them. —— When (ſaith he)

"the

"the Devil hath Tempted us with these "Blasphemous Thoughts, he goes on---See, "saith he, what an Heart you have, Are "you not now a grievous Sinner? This "the Soul cannot deny. He groweth "upon this, God is therefore, saith he, very "angry with thee: How can God but be "angry with such a Blasphemer? Here, "saith he, do but yield a little, and he sink-"eth you, and I have known many thus "undone. — You must therefore govern "these Thoughts, you must oppose the "Adversary, and fix your self upon this, "*That* God is not displeased *with you* for "these Impressions and Thoughts, if you "do not entertain and indulge them. Thus far that great man. And indeed this is the first and great thing to be learned by the Soul. The Sin of *Atheism* and *Blasphemy* will in an Hour of Temptation (especially) appear so great, so hainous unto the Soul, that unless you can deliver such a Soul from the apprehensions of such a guilt, all that you can say to it will be of little avail. Ministers and private Christians dealing and treating with Souls in these paroxysmes, ought to lay the great Stress here, and to make this the *Alpha* and *Omega* of their Discourses. What may be said to evince this to the

Soul I have largely shewed you in the former Chapter: Let the thus troubled Soul meditate of those things, and let Experienced Ministers and Christians add what they can of that nature, and lay the great Stress here, and they will find all little enough to induce a Soul thus circumstanced to be thus perswaded; and on the other side, if this be done, the Cure is wrought, the Soul will then quickly understand that *Faith* and *Patience* are its work: The more wee can shew the Soul of the *Devil* in the Impression, the more it will be frighted from hearkening to, or complying with him, and the more Valiant will the Christian be in this Spiritual Combate: Mind therefore Christians under these circumstances, that Christ himself was not without such kind of Sinful Impressions, yet without Sin: That our first Parents in Innocency had them: That it is contrary to what our Saviour hath Taught us to think, that any thing, *That is from without, and entereth into a Man, defileth a Man*; That there is no Law prohibits them. That there being nothing of our own will in them, it is Impossible they should be our guilt, *&c.* But these things I have further opened, and enlarged upon in the former Chapter. Second-

Secondly, *Indeavour to possess your selves with the truest apprehensions of God you can.* This is good before the hour of Temptation, it will prepare you for the Spiritual Combate; and if you have neglected this before, yet do not neglect it in the hour of Temptation. Here I shall onely give you this caution, Take heed of taking your *Notions* of God from *Sense*, or *meerly* from Reason. 1. *Not from Sense*, Spiritual Beings fall under no cognisance of the *External Senses*. None ever saw *Gods Shape*, none ever saw his Similitude; and here let me *caution* you, against any *Pictures* of God, or any *Person* in the *God-head*. We are ready in our minds to form *Idea's* in our minds of any Beings according to the representations, which Pictures and Images make of them. It is Impossible but all Pictures, Images, or External representations, of the Divine Being, must be Teachers of *Lyes*. It is impossible that a Limner should draw the true representation of a man whom he never saw. How is it possible he should draw any representation of an Invisible God, a Being which he neither ever saw nor can see? The fairest pretence is for the Picture of our Saviour, who assumed our nature, and was a man in all things. But all those Pictures must be Teachers of lies

lies too: For Christ was God-Man, and the representation of a Man is no representation of the Person of the *Mediatour*. Doth any say that upon the same Argument there should be no *Pictures* drawn, for a *Picture* doth but represent our *Fleshly Part*, the *Soul* cannot be expressed. I answer there yet are these differences: 1. The *Picture of our friend is the representation of a being that we know is or was informed with a reasonable Soul*, so as the other essential part of the man, is on course understood; but it is not so as to Christ. Tho the *Picture of an humane Shape* hath this advantage, that we may understand under it a reasonable Soul, of which every man is possessed, yet we cannot under any such Shape understand the Divine Nature *personally united to the Humane Nature*. 2. Again, Even the Picture of a man, if it hath no similitude of the man, is but a *Teacher of a lie*, and doth but help our thoughts with false notions and conceptions. And what *Limner* ever saw the Lord in his Humane Shape, to draw a representation of him? What need any Pictures of Christ, when every man we see, is as true a representation of him, as any Limner can make, who never saw him in the flesh, nor a true Copy to draw him by. I am apt to believe that this was one Rea-

Reason of Gods so severe *prohibition of Images* and the *Likeness of any thing* to represent God; because he knew that those things would be of this pernicious use, to give us false notions and *Idea's* of God: for you shall observe when you have seen the pretended Picture, or resemblance of a Man, you will fancy him according to that *Representation*, whether the Picture be any thing like the *Person* for whom it is made, yea or no. 3. To which I might add, That admitting a *Picture of a Man, or a Friend*, be not like the *Person*, and give our Fancies a false Notion of him, yet in this there *is no Sin*, no *Defilement*, no Guilt upon the Soul by it; but to *Conceive amiss of God* is a thing quite of another Nature and of further danger to the Soul. This hath made me sometimes wonder, that *Luther*, tho he abhorred Images, and shewed as great a detestation of them as any other, as they are used in *Popery*, as they are means or objects of Adoration; yet allowed the use and standing of them in *Churches*. Certainly it is a thing of very dangerous consequence, whether in Churches or our own private Houses; for we shall find a great proneness in us to *form out Notions of God according to such representations*; and

if

if thoſe repreſentations be lies, and falſe, ſuch will our *Notions* be: and if this be not a fair way to fill the Soul with *Atheiſtical* and *Blaſphemous Thoughts* concerning God and Chriſt, I do not know what is.

2. Secondly, Take heed of taking your *Notions of God from Reaſon.* Reaſon is a power within us, by which we make Concluſions from ſome Principles. Now theſe Principles are either Connatural to us, and bred in, and with us; or ſuch as we have from *Revelation.* Reaſon working upon Connate Natural Principles, will much convince us, that *there is a God*, and ſhew us alſo ſomething what manner of Being God muſt be. Nature will tell us that nothing is the cauſe of it ſelf, and will lead us to a *Primum Mobile*, a firſt Being, a firſt Cauſe, a firſt Mover; and will teach us, That whoſoever is the Cauſe of any Excellency or Perfection in another by his Communication of it, if he loſeth nothing by that Communication, muſt needs have that Perfection and Excellency in a more Eminent Degree in himſelf. But alas the *Divine Being* is Infinitely above the Fathom and Comprehenſion of *Humane Reaſon*, concluding only from Connate and Natural Principles. There is an Excellent uſe

of

of Reason to give us the true Notion of God: That is by setting it on Work, to conclude from *Principles of Revelation*; First firmly Believing whatever is revealed in Holy Writ, then using our Reason both to compare *Scripture with Scripture*, to find out the true Revelation, the true sense and meaning of Holy Writ; and to shew us that what the Scripture revealeth concerning God, is but what Reason will allow may be.

3. But the Surest Way for Persons to come to a true Notion of God, is *to attend to what the Scripture saith*, to Believe concerning God, whatsoever we find there. No man hath seen God at any time, no Reason is able to Comprehend an Infinite Being, and the Perfections of it, but the Son of God, and the Holy Spirit of God. They have Revealed God, and thence we must take those Measures of the Knowledg of God, which we are capable of, till we come to *see him as he is*, and to *know him* as *we are known*. Let it be therefore the Care of every Christian from those Sacred Writings to posses himself of due Notions and just Apprehensions of the Divine Being. A Christian shall find these three Eminent Advantages of this Knowledge according to the Measure we are Capable of. 1. *There*

1. *There is no such Director of our Internal and External Homage to God, as a juſt Notion of the Divine Being.* According to our Apprehenſions of his *Majeſty, Power, Greatneſs*, and *Juſtice*, ſo ſhall we *Adore, Revere*, and *Fear him:* According to our Apprehenſions of his *Goodneſs* and *Mercy*, ſo we ſhall *Love him*, Breath after him, and *Delight* in him. According to our Apprehenſions of his *Truth* and *Fidelity*, ſo ſhall we *Confide*, and *Truſt in him.* If we truly Apprehend him as a *Spirit*, we ſhall Conclude he muſt be Worſhipped with our *Spirits*, and that all *Noiſes* and *Exterieur pretended Homages* (if not expreſly commanded by him) are indeed no Homage to him, but ſome fooliſh Acts of *Voluntary Humility*, and that all *Lip Labour*, all *Bodily Homage*, ſeperated from the Internal Homage, Attention, and Intention of the Soul, and its Stooping before him, are of no avail; being no proportionable Homage to a Spiritual being in the Eye of Reaſon, nor required by him at all.

2. Secondly, *There is no* ſuch *Antidote* as *this againſt the Peſtilence of Erroneous Doctrines and Opinions.* We have abroad many Erroneous Doctrines relating to the great Truths of God, if they be ſearched

to

to the bottom, you will find them springing up out of a false Apprehension and Conception of the Nature of God. It were easie to shew you how a *due Knowledg* and Conception of God, will fortify the Soul against many Errors. But,

3. Lastly, *There is no such Weapon to repel these Fiery Darts*, of which I am speaking. A Soul is not soon dispossest of such Notions of God, as it is once well rooted in; and especially when it is rooted in them upon the Authority, the *Infallible Authority of a Divine Revelation.* It is good therefore for Christians, before any such Temptations come upon them, to be well Instructed concerning the *Nature* and *Attributes of God*, and to entertain no Notions but such as shall be confirmed unto him from Scriptures; nor is any thing of more Advantage to a Soul in an hour of such great Temptations, than to Read, and have Read to him, Discourses of this nature; such especialy as are most Scriptural, and indeavour to Establish the Faith of Christians, not in or by the wisdom of men, but the Power of God. Let this be a Second Direction.

3. Thirdly, *Let no Soul under these Temptations, forbear Reading the Scriptures and waiting upon God in the hearing of his Word.*

Word. I have often observed and lamented the great Conquest which the Devil ordinarily getteth over Souls under this as well as other great Temptations, in perswading them to forbear Reading and Hearing the Word of God. *Luther* tells us, That it is the Devils great Art, —*Ut nos abducat ab oratione et verbo ut sic nudos aggrediatur ac vincat.* To draw us off from the Word, that so he may set upon us disarmed, and make a Conquest of us. The Word of God is the *Sword of the Spirit*, if the Devil can get us off from that, he hath taken our Sword from us; the Preaching of the Word (I mean when it is Preached plainly and faithfully, that Christians do not meerly hear λόγοι σοφίσματων, the Words of Men puffed up with the Idle Conceits of their own Rhethorick or Logick) is Gods great Ordinance, with which he concurreth, and where he is present. And this I have observed in Experience, when any Christians under these violences, have been perswaded to go out and to hear the Word, they have ordinarily found those their freest Hours; tho it may be the Temptation hath afterwards returned: I know Christians under these Circumstances find a great strife with themselves, and go out with some diffi-

difficulty to hear Sermons; but I never but knew a good effect of their going, either for a shorter, or a more lasting Relief.

4. Fourthly, *Let Christians under these Circumstances*, and not then *onely*, *but at all times*, *avoid any communion or converse with Atheistical and Blasphemous Persons*, *or Reading or looking upon any Atheistical and Blasphemous Books.* Thoughts you know engender in us by Reflexion upon what we *see* or *hear*, or else they are *bred* by the workings of our own Minds, without such Aids and Assistances. Oh beware of these things as the Bane and Poyson of thy Soul; do what thou canst, thy Mind will be revolving, thy Thoughts will be roling upon what thou hast *seen*, *read*, or *heard.* Avoid therefore *Atheistical Persons*, *Blasphemous Company.* What knowest thou how farr God will leave thee, when thou hast run thy self into a Temptation.

5. Fifthly, *If any such Thoughts arise in thy Heart*, *give them no entertainment.* Chide them down, turn thy mind to some other Objects, do not give them place for an hour, no if it be possible not for a moment; these Cockatrices are best crush'd

in the Egg. Allow no parly with no ſtudy or deliberation upon, or with a Thought derogatory to the Majeſty on high, to the Honour and Glory of the great God.

6. Sixthly, *If thou beeſt already under the preſſure of theſe Thoughts, give thy ſelf all lawful Diverſion thou canſt.* There is a Religious *Diverſion*, by *Reading*, *Hearing*, *Prayer*, which beſides the Diverſion that is in them, are thy Duties, Ordinances of God; but there are alſo Civil Diverſions of *Worldly Buſineſs*, *Moderate Recreations*. Some of the former I have already adviſed, and ſhall by and by ſpeak ſomething to the other: But allow thy ſelf alſo theſe other *Diverſions*, better it is for thee to be doing any thing that is lawful, than ſitting ſtill and doing nothing but afflicting and tormenting thy ſelf, and yielding up thy ſelf entirely to the Conduct and Governance, and Suggeſtions of thy grand Adverſary.

7. Seventhly, Be much in the company of *Faithful Miniſters* and *Good Chriſtians*, ſuch eſpecially as are knowing and experienced; as the Lips of Wicked *Men talk of Miſchief*; Pro. 24. 2. and as the Preacher ſaith, *Swallow up themſelves* and others alſo, ſo the *Lips of Knowledge are a precious Jewel*; Pro. 20. 15. they diſperſe Know-

Knowledge; *Prov.* 15. 7. They *feed many*; Prov. 10. 21. Yea and they Heal many. It is a Saying of *Luther* (in the aforementioned place, *Ingens est pondus in verbo fratris quod tempore periculi ex Scripturâ pronuntiatur*: There is a great Weight even in a private Christians Words pronounced *from Scripture*. The healing is in the *Divine Word*, let it come to thee through what *Vehicle* it will; sometimes it pleaseth God, that it should come out of the Word as running through the *Ministers* Lips. He is Gods Ordinance. Sometimes, as running out of the private *Christians* Lips: Private Christians, are also a more private Ordinance of God, for the *Admonition* of those that are running into danger, the restoring of such as are fallen, the comforting of those that are sad, and the strengthening of those that are weak.

8. *Lastly*, Let all such as are under this Temptation *be much in Fasting and Prayer*. *Prayer* is an Universal Remedy for all *Evils*: Our Saviour hath told us there is a kind of *Divils*, that goeth not out but *by Fasting and Prayer*; and because for the most part Christians under these Circumstances are not so fit for *Solemn Prayers* as others are, let them here call in the

help of *Ministers and good Christians*, whom they may reasonably think have an Interest in, and a Power with God, and shall prevail; who can take hold of the Lords Strength, and ask him with Success concerning the Works of his Hands; and will not let the Lord go until he blesseth them. The hand of *Joab*, the *hand of the Devil* is in this thing, and the strong man keepeth the house until a stronger than he cometh; and the Devil hath no Superiour but the Almighty. In this Case therefore all Friends of such Persons are highly concerned to get Prayers for them, Solemn Prayers; for the Affliction is exceeding heavy, none more inaccountable, none more intollerable: My self have known it as to two issues, in the destroying of themselves, not able to stand under the burthen of it; tho as to several I have known it have a better Issue. I onely tell you this, to mind you to be more careful, more concerned, and to neglect no Natural, Moral, or Spiritual Means.

I must Confess the Regular Method of Curing Spiritual, as well as Natural Distempers, is by *removing the Cause*; but as in some Natural Distempers it is not easie to find out the true Cause, which makes

makes the Cure difficult, so neither is it easie to find out the true cause here: *Melancholy* is one Cause of several Distempers of the Soul, disposing a person to more Thoughtfulness and Seriousness, to more Fears and Jealousies, *&c.* and Direful and Black Thoughts concerning our selves; whence it is not hard to conceive how Persons in whom that prevaileth to a great Excess (if before they have ever minded their Souls and their Eternal Interest) should by it be disposed to *Excessive Fears* and *Desperate Thoughts*, as to their *Eternal State*, but it is hard to understand, how the prevalence of that or any other peccant Bodily Humour should dispose Persons to *Atheistical*, *or Blasphemous Thoughts* of, or against God; further then that it may run Persons into a Deliration: so as beeing broke loose from the Conduct and Government of Reason, they shall think and talk any thing. Nor were it difficult to give some account of this *Temptation*, if we could find that such alone fell under it, as formerly were Persons of *Atheistical Principles* or *Lives*. God as to such might be reasonably thought to give them up to a *Reprobate Mind*, and *Understanding*: but we upon Experience find, that they are very often

the grievences of Pious and Devout Souls, who have lived a life in a daily Dread and Holy Reverence of God; and as to such, what Account further to give of them, then, *That they are heavy Trials, with which it pleaseth the Wise God sometimes to Exercise his Dearest People*, I cannot tell.

F I N I S.

Concerning

TEMPTATIONS TO Self-Murther.

CHAP. I.

The Text 1 John 3. 15. *opened ſhortly. How far the Sin of Murther extendeth, beyond what is puniſhable by the Judge, To the Killer of himſelf, as well as to the Killer of others. In what Senſe. No Murtherer hath Eternal Life. Two things underſtood by Eternal Life. Whether it be in no caſe lawful for one to kill himſelf? That it is not, proved by Four Arguments. Whether no perſon,*

that hath Eternal Life in the Seed (being born of God) or shall have it in the Fruit, can kill himself. Six Conclusions resolving that Case. One that killeth himself directly may have Eternal Life. One that murthereth himself cannot. The difference of those two Expressions.

THe Apostle, 1 *John.* 3. 15. determineth thus, *Whosoever hateth his Brother, is a Murtherer, and you know that no Murtherer hath Eternal Life abiding in him.* It is onely the later part of that verse which I shall concern my self in, not intending to consider the *Sin of Murther*, so far as it relateth unto our *Brother*, but as it relateth to our selves; and the same Person may be both the *Murtherer*, and the *Murthered*, and the Apostle concluding generally πᾶς ἀνθρωποκτόνος, *Every Murtherer hath not; or no Murtherer hath Eternal Life in himself*; (for they are Equipollent Phrases) gives me this liberty. Though *the Murtherer* he is speaking of in this Text, is the *Murtherer of his Brother*, and that

but

but in his Heart, by a *rooted inveterate Hatred*: The *Propoſition of* this Text is plainly this, *That no Murtherer hath Eternal Life abiding in him*; In the Explication of which here are two *Terms* to be Opened. 1. *Who is a Murtherer.* 2. *In what Senſe it is ſaid, That no Murtherer hath Eternal Life in himſelf.* As to the firſt I ſhall conclude,

1. That *Murther according to the Law of God, extendeth much farther, then it is or can be enquired, of, or puniſhed by the Law of Man.* This appeareth evidently from the *Apoſtle* in this place, where he ſaith that, *He who hateth his Brother, is a Murtherer*; no *Law of Man* ſaith ſo, nor proportioneth a Puniſhment to the *Secret Motions of the Heart*, but the Law of God doth: Hence our Saviour correcting the *Phariſees* in Interpretation of the Law of God, and in *juſtification* of himſelf, that he came not to *deſtroy* it, but to *fulfil it*, begins with the giving the Senſe of this Commandement far different from what the *Phariſees* had given, *Matth.* 5. 20, 21. *You have heard that it hath been ſaid by them of old time, you ſhall not kill; and whoſoever kills, ſhall be guilty of the Judgement: But I ſay unto you that whoſoever is angry with his Brother without a cauſe,*

ſhall

ſhall be in danger of the Judgment: and whoſoever ſhall ſay unto his Brother Raca, *ſhall be in danger of the Council: But whoſoever ſhall ſay,* Thou Fool, *ſhall be in danger of Hell-fire.* From theſe two *Texts* appears, that by the *Law of God*, not onely he who actually *ſheddeth Mans Blood without a juſt cauſe, and putteth a period to his days*; but he *who entertaineth in his heart any thoughts, purpoſes, or deſigns, any deliberations, or gives conſent to ſuch a thing, he who takes a pleaſure in any ſuch thoughts, or entertaineth* any Affection *or Paſſion conducing to ſuch an end, or uſeth any means towards it, is a Murtherer.* Upon this account St. *John* ſaith, *he that hateth his Brother, is a Murtherer.* Now the Law of Man that onely judgeth of *overt Acts*, and determineth him onely a *Murtherer*, that *wilfully, and without due Authority, doth take away the life of another.* The Text in *St. John* muſt be neceſſarily extended further.

2. Secondly, According to the Laws of Men as well as the Laws of God, *He* who *wilfully*, and *without due Authority, putteth an end to his own Life*, is a *Murtherer, as well as he who ſo taketh away the Life of another.* The Law ſaith, *Thou ſhalt not bear falſe Witneſs againſt thy Neighbour*; but

but it says, *Thou shalt do no Murther*, intimating that a Man may be guilty of Murther by *Murthering himself*, as well as by *taking away the Life of his Neighbour*. And the *Laws of Men* do so adjudge it, though the Punishment due to *Murther* cannot be inflicted on one already dead, yet they order *Shame and Ignominy*, *Forfeiture of Goods*, *Ignominious Burial*, to testifie their Judgment of the Fact: And indeed the Law of the Second Table being against *Violations* of *Charity*, and for the maintaining Charity, and preventing the *Violations* of, and *Breaches* upon *Humane Society*, it is unreasonable to think, That this *Charity* should not begin at our selves, and that we should not be under higher Obligations to preserve our own Lives than the Lives of our Neighbours; as much obliged not to deface the Image of God upon our selves, as upon others. Which is the reason that God himself giveth of his first Precept to *Noah* against Murther, *Gen.* 9. 6. *Whoso sheddeth Mans Blood, by Man shall his Blood be shed; for in the Image of God made he Man*: So then the *Murtherer* in Scripture Sense is, *That Man or Woman who wilfully, and without any just cause, or due Authority, putteth an end to his own Life, or the Life of another*,

other, or who nouriſheth in his Heart, any Purpoſe, Deſign, or Deliberation, or Affection of that tendency, or ſpeaketh any Words of that tendency, or doth any Action tending to it, though it be not perfective of it.

From this Notion of *Murther*, and *Murtherers*, evidently appeareth that two ſorts of Perſons are not to be charged with this great Guilt. 1. *Such as are Inſtruments of Death unto others* in a *juſt War*, or in times of Peace, *at the command of the Magiſtrate in the Execution of Juſtice*; when Men for their Crimes are righteouſly adjudged to Death, and Perſons are commanded to execute the Sentence: *Nor ſuch who (intending no ſuch thing) by accident, and againſt their Wills, are occaſion of Death either to themſelves or others:* This we uſually call *Manſlaughter*, not *Murther*. Nor ſuch who *in their own juſt defence are forced to kill others*, ſuppoſe Robbers *by the High-way*, or breaking into *our Houſes*. God himſelf determined this, *Exod.* 22. 2. *If a Thief be found breaking up, and be ſmitten that he die, there ſhall no Blood be ſhed for him. If the Sun be riſen there ſhall be Blood ſhed.* The Reaſon of that is, becauſe then help might have been called in, and he taken;

and

and by the Law of God, he was to *make Restitution*; or if he had nothing, he was to be sold for his Theft; as you read there, v. 3. So that the killing of him was not necessary for the defence of him that was robbed: But my design is not to handle the Cases relating to *Murther* of another, nor indeed any of them, onely to speak to *Self-Murther*: However the Text saith, *No Murtherer hath Eternal Life.* We have heard the Subject, let me open the *Prædicate*, and shew in what Sense the *Proposition* is true, *That no Murtherer hath Eternal Life.*

2. *Eternal Life* is to be considered, either, *In the First Fruits of it, or the fuller Harvest.*

1. In the *First Fruits*, and so it must be considered here, or else we must admit an *Enallage* of the *Present Tense* for the *Future*, ἔχει for ἕξει, and not onely so, but also limit the Sense of it to the Future (for which I see no reason at all.) For take *Eternal Life* as it signifieth the happy State of Souls after the Resurrection, *in the Beatifical Vision of God*; so no one alive hath Eternal Life. Eternal Life therefore in the first place *signifieth*, That *special Effectual Grace of God, which will certainly bring the Soul to Eternal Life.* That which

which he before called the *Seed of God abiding* in the Soul. And that will bring in a Queſtion (to which I may poſſibly ſpeak ſomething by and by) *Whether an Elect Soul, that is called and ſanctified, may not fall into this Sin?*

2. But 2dly. Eternal Life is alſo conſiderable in the *full Harveſt*, as it ſignifieth the *Bleſſed Eſtate of the Soul in the Beatifical Viſion of God*; and ſo it is true *no Murtherer*, none that dieth under the Actual Guilt of Murther, not repented of, not removed from him, ſhall ſee God; and to this purpoſe is that, *Rev.* 21. 8. where *Murtherers* are reckoned amongſt thoſe *who ſhall have their part in the Lake that burneth with Fire and Brimſtone*, which is the Second Death; and that brings in a Second Queſtion, *Whether a Murtherer cannot be ſaved?* But before I can ſpeak any thing to theſe, it is reaſonable, I ſhould ſpeak ſomething to a more Original Queſtion, with reference to this Sin.

Caſe. *Whether it be not lawful for a Perſon in any Caſe to Kill him or her ſelf?*

It is plain from the reading of Prophaner Hiſtory, that diverſe of the Heathens, yea ſome of their *Philoſophers*, did

did not think it *unlawful for Men and Women to kill themſelves*, but thought it in ſome Caſes their Duty. In Caſe of their *Countrey*, or *Friends*, *under great Diſturbances of Mind* or *Preſſures of Bodily Afflictions*, &c. but even amongſt them there were a wiſer, and ſo underſtanding part, *who* from their Light of Reaſon ſaw better things; for even they would ſometimes diſpute, *That it was no Indication of Valour or Fortitude, but of a baſe, and impotent and cowardly Mind*, that durſt not encounter with a little pain or trouble; and *that we were ſet in this World by our great Commander*, the Lord of all, as Souldiers in a Rank and File, which we muſt not break out of, but by order and direction from him; and that *it was an Injury to the Kingdom or Commonwealth wherein we lived*, and ſuch like. But we have a ſurer Rule to guid us by; to wit, the holy Scriptures. *And the Unlawfulneſs of it upon any pretence whatſoever*, is determined by all Divines, both Ancient and Modern, that are of any value; and that for theſe Reaſons:

1. Becauſe the Law of God is expreſs, *Thou ſhalt do no Murther*, and that Precept is not to be limited to the Murthering of others; for the Law of God doth

not

not say, *Thou shalt not kill thy Neighbour:* but, *Thou shalt not kill:* it must indeed be restrained to Men and Women, for God hath given us a Liberty, as to Beasts to *Kill and Eat*, nor is the Law concerning *Brute and Irrational Creatures*, but such as are *Rational*, and that without distinction; Now he that *killeth* himself doth *kill*: Again, the Law in the General Scope of it, commandeth *Charity*; now we ought in the first place to be *Charitable* to our selves; *Murther*, say *Casuists*, *is the Killing of a* Man *without Authority*. Now this he doth, who killeth himself, for none is *superior* to himself, none hath Authority over himself.

2. Again (saith *Filiucius* one of the Popish Casuists (who yet though many of them give strange liberty to Men to *kill others*, yet few or none give Men liberty to kill themselves.) *To kill a Person can be lawful but in two Causes:* 1. *For our own Defence*, so a Person may kill one assaulting him, breaking into his House, *&c.* Or, 2. *For Execution of Righteous Sentence* of *Justice*. But none can kill himself in his *own Defence*, nor be a *Magistrate to himself*, to Judge, Sentence, or Condemn himself, so that say they it can be lawful in no Case for Men to put an end to their own Lives. 3. Again,

3. Again, They argue truly *from a particular Enumeration of the ſuppoſed Juſtificant Cauſes that ſhould juſtifie ſuch a Fact*, ſhewing the *Invalidity* of them. We read of one of the Heathens, who having got a dark Notion of an *Eternal State*, would put an end to his Life, that he might *the ſooner be in poſſeſſion of it. But this is not the way to Eternal Life.* St. *John* ſaith, *No Murtherer hath Eternal Life.* Eternal Life is the gift of God, and he gives it according to his Revealed Will, and his Revealed Will is, *Rev.* 21. 8. That *Murtherers* ſhould *have their Portion in the Lake which burneth with Fire and Brimſtone*, and this is the Second Death. A Second Cauſe (which the Heathen aſſigned as) juſtificant of Self-Murther, was, *To avoid the Violence of others*; ſuppoſe Perſecutors or Mutherers. But this cannot juſtifie, For what harm can the injuries or violence of others do us? Saith *Auguſtine.* A Third Cauſe ſome aſſign, or pretend, is, To *avoid Sin for the time to come.* To prevent their further diſhonouring of God. But this were *to do evil, that good might come of it*; and to prejudge our ſelves, and deny Gods Mercy to Back-ſliders. A Fourth Cauſe aſſigned, is, *To take revenge upon our ſelves for paſt Sins.* But who made

us Judges and Revengers in the Case? And surely past Sins are better washed by the *Blood of Christ*, and the Water of true Repentance. The last and indeed most general and true Cause, is, To *avoid Shame and Ignominy, to deliver our selves from horrors and terrors of Conscience, or other miseries.* But the very Heathen condemned this, as the Indication of an *Impotent Cowardly Spirit, of an hasty and impatient Spirit*: Where is the Faith and Patience of Christians, if this were lawful? But I shall have occasion in the sequel of this Discourse further to shew the exceeding vanity of these Pretences for the justification of so horrid a Fact.

4. Again, *It is a Sin against the Light and Law of Nature. No man yet ever hated his own Flesh.* Nature it self, not debaucht nor disordered, saith to every one *Spare thy Self.* There cannot be a greater Violence offered to our *Nature* surely, than to destroy it. To shut up this Discourse (there being few that stand in need of this Conviction, who are in an ordinary way capable of it.) Dr. *Ames* a *Learned Casuist* of our own, concludes it a Sin against *Nature, Piety, Justice, Charity.* Of the first I have spoken. It appeareth to be against *Piety*, as being against *the Au-*

Authority of God, who alone hath *Life* and *Death* in his Hand, and hath the *Power of our Lives.* 2. Againſt the *Goodneſs of God*, from Him, and of his *Goodneſs we live*, and the upholding our Souls in Life, ought to be acknowledged to God as a great Piece of the Divine Goodneſs and Mercy to us. 3. Againſt the *Providence of God* in the Government of the World, diſturbing that Order which he hath ſet. A Sin *againſt Juſtice*; which will not allow any perſon to rob or ſpoil the Kingdom or Common-wealth in which he is a Member, at his pleaſure. Againſt *Charity* (ſaith he) which ought to begin at our ſelves, and by which we are firſt obliged to preſerve our own lives; and then the lives of others. From theſe and ſuch like Arguments, Divines do reaſonably conclude, That *Self-murther* is in all Caſes *Sinful*, in no Caſe *Lawful*, nor by any Pretence Excuſable.

The next queſtion is, 2. Qu. *Whether it be to that degree ſinful, as that no Soul that hath received the Grace of God, can commit it?* And 3. Qu. *Whether no Soul that doth commit it, can have Eternal Life, can be ſaved?* Both theſe ſeem to make up the Apoſtle *John*'s Senſe, when he ſaith, *We know that no Murtherer hath Eternal Life.*

I will speak to them both together in some few Conclusions.

1. *Con.* It is very hard to say, *What Sin, one that belongeth to the Election of Grace, yea one who is called with an holy Calling, and in a State of Grace; and who shall certainly be saved, may not commit.* You know into what Sins, *Lot*, *Noah*, *David*, and *Peter*, fell in an hour of very high and great Temptation.

2. *Con.* In particular, *Such a person may be the actual Murtherer of another: David* was so. I mean by *Actual*, not that he immediately committed it, but as it is contra-distinguished to murtherous habits in the Heart; in the Sense that St. *John* saith, *He who hateth his Brother is a Murtherer.* This is plain in the Case of *David.*

3. *Con.* Such a *Murtherer* cannot have the *Seed of God* (at that time) *working and abiding in him, nor upon such a fact, have a proximate Right to Eternal Life.* This is plain, for *Murthers* are no *fruits of the Spirit* but of the *Flesh*; *Gal.* 5. 21. And no person under the guilt of Sin, before *Repentance* and the *renewed exercise of Faith*, can either have any *Sight of his Grace*, or any *Proximate Right to Eternal Life.*

4. *Con.* It is possible, That such a great

great Sinner, as the *Murthererer of another*, may be *renewed by Repentance* and *Faith, and so may obtain Everlasting Life.* This appeareth both by the Promise, and also by those Presidents of Free Grace which the Holy Scriptures do furnish us with, that we may have Consolation: For the Promise it is made to all *Sin* and *Blasphemy*; Matth. 12. 31. *David* was a Murtherer, so was *Manasses*, &c.

5. *It is possible, That a man may be in a Justified and Sanctified Estate, and may put an end to his own Life, and yet not be a Self-murtherer:* That is, now supposing him distracted, and in a fit of *Frenzy*, not understanding what he doth: This man is now not to be judged a Murtherer of himself, his Act is not a Rational Humane Act; and doubtless shall not be imputed to him. This may happen in high Feavors, *&c.* But

6. *Supposing a Sanctified Person to be in the use of his Reason, (though not perfectly) in a great measure able to guid his actions by the conduct of it; he cannot do any such action: The Grace of God working or stiring in him. Nor obtain Eternal Life, without Repentance of it; for which he can have but very little time, if any at all.* And this I take to be the Apostle's Sense, when he saith, That no

Murtherer *hath Eternal Life abiding in him.* 1. *He hath no true Grace working or acting in him.* 2. *In that State of Guilt, without true Repentance* (for which he hath little or no time) *he dying, cannot be saved.* 3. *He can have no proximate Right to Eternal Life.* I shall add further, That I find no great difficulty to determine, *That a person in the use of his Reason, killing himself out-right and presently, cannot be saved.* Men may offer such violence to themselves, as they may not presently die by the Act they have done in order to it; so as they may have time to *repent* and be received to Mercy (that made me put in the word [outright, forthwith] and there is no Sin that is upon a True Repentance unpardonable. They may do it in a *Deliration* or *Distraction*, when they are not under the guidance and conduct of their Reason, and then it is not an Humane Act. But supposing their Act to be an *Humane*, *Rational Act*, and so effectually done, as it leaveth no *breathing time for Repentance*; I cannot see a possibility of Salvation in such a Case. I can easily agree it, that every one who *killeth himself*, doth not *murther himself.* Possibly a man does an *Action*, or makes some *Omission*, by the doing or the omitting of which he dies; but he never

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designed, never intended it; but possibly hoped for a quite contrary effect, of such Action or Omission. Such a one may be said to have killed himself, but not to have murthered himself. Nay although a person had no such intention contrary, but by his mistake, what he designed for good to himself, issueth in such an effect; yet he may be no *Self-murtherer*: *because not under the perfect guidance of his Reason.* Suppose a Child, or a Fool and Natural Ideot, which neither of them are guided by their Reason, should do such Acts, I think they oughe not to be concluded *Murtherers.* The Case is the same of *Frenetick* and *Distracted Persons.* Suppose in a *Violent Feavour* or a *Frenzy*, occasioned some other way, a person should destroy him or her self; I would be very tender of concluding such a person under this guilt. The difficultest Case seemeth to me to be in the Case of that *partial Deliration* which we see often caused from *Melancholy*; and is commonly attended with *violent impulses from Satan.* The Question is, Supposing *persons under these circumstances do destroy themselves, what is to be determined concerning their Everlasting State?* If they offer such violence to themselves, as doth not produce death pre-

ſently, but gives them a time for Repentance, the Determination will be beſt founded upon our ſight of their Behaviour, upon the reprieve which the Providence of God giveth them: Whether they heartily repent of ſuch attempts, and be ſerious in asking pardon at Gods hands, yea or no. If the attempt hath ſuch a ſpeedy iſſue in Death, as leaves no room or place for this. That which is to be conſidered, is, *How they before were, in what poſſeſſion of Reaſon, under what violence of Impulſes*; which may induce us to believe the action not *deliberate* and *voluntary*. And truly where ſuch an *unhappy iſſue ſhutteth up a precedent Holy Life, ſpent in a fear and dread of God, an hatred of Sin, a deſire to walk in the Commandments of God, and that for ſome good ſpace of time*; I ſhould be apt to judg very *charitably*: That is, that the perſons final act of *Self-killing* was not *his* or *her Act*; but the Effect of *Melancholy* to a *great* heighth (as a Natural Diſeaſe) working in him: or of *Satan*, by his *violent Impreſſions and Importunities*; but uſing his or her *Natural Members* or *Powers*, for the Production of *ſo direful and ſad an Effect*. It is true, the judgment is very hard, becauſe in ſuch Caſes we cannot

deter-

determine; especially in Fits, to what *degree* the person is deprived of the use of his or her Reason; and acteth but like a brute Creature. And this makes such issues, whatever they prove to the persons concerned immediately; yet to their Friends very uncomfortable. So as although they do not mourn for them *wholly without hope.* Yet of all Mourners for Relations, they mourn with the *least* hope, and are *hardest to be comforted.* But this is all I shall speak to this *Doctrinally.* What I principally intended in this Discourse, will fall into the Application.

CHAP. II.

The former Discourse applied by way of Præmonition to all, not rashly to judge persons that kill themselves, as to their Spiritual or their Eternal State. Why persons should not so rashly judge. What is very sad and uncomfortable in the Case of such as kill themselves. What may be hoped as to them. The Judgment

ment of them beſt made from the General courſe of their former Life.

1. *Con.* FRom hence *in the firſt place will eaſily be concluded our Duty, not to be too haſty in judging the Spiritual or Eternal State of any, or at leaſt of many, who have killed themſelves.* It is indeed a moſt ſad and miſerable Spectacle, or hearing; and which may occaſion in us trouble, fear, and trembling: but yet *Secret Things belong unto God, Revealed Things to us and to our Children.* It is a *Sad Reflexion, that we have no Inſtances in Scripture of any good Men, whom God ſuffered thus to fall.* I count that Inſtance of *Samſon* none: He was but in his *Calling*, he was eminently called of God to adventure his Life for the *Iſraelites*, in being revenged on the *Philiſtines*. It was the whole Buſineſs of his Life, who will call a *Soldier* a *Self-murtherer*, who in defence of his Countrey expoſeth himſelf (not indeed to a certainty of Death, but) to an eminent probability: Nor was there an abſolute certainty of *Samſons* Death, the Providence of God might have ordered Timbers ſo, that he might have ſurvived (as we know hath been in Blowing up

up of Houſes) but *Samſon* plainly ſhewed by his words ſpake immediately before, that his end was not the delivery of himſelf out of Miſery, but being *avenged on the Philiſtines*; which was the buſineſs of his Life, to which he was called of God. Beſides that, had he not had an extraordinary Aſſiſtance of Divine Power, his hands had never pulled down the Houſe; which teſtified Gods Approbation of the Fact. But for any other, we have not ſo much as an appearance of any good Men that were the Authors of their own Deſtruction voluntarily; but on the other ſide, it being *certain, or at leaſt very probable*, that no good man, *mens is compos*, in the free exerciſe of his Reaſon, can do it, it is unreaſonable for us to think that in that Age of the World, there were none who through ſome Diſeaſes, Feavors, or Melancholy, were Diſtracted, and loſt the uſe and exerciſe of their Reaſon; nor is it reaſonable to think that the way and manner of the deaths of perſons not dying in the uſe of their Reaſon, ſhould be Recorded in Holy Writ. It is indeed a ſad and uncomfortable Death, both to thoſe that are *Near Relations*, and to thoſe that are *Neighbours* and *Spectators* afar off; but in regard that it is poſſible the

the *Act* was an *irrational Act*, done by one, who when he or she did it, were not in the *possession of their Reason*, so as to exercise and use it. I would have no judgment passed upon the Eternal State of such persons Souls; and indeed the best judgment that can be past by any in the Case, must be *from our Reflections upon the former course of their Lives*. If Men or Women have formerly so led their Lives, as we could not but judg that they lived in the Fear of God, hating all Sin, walking with God closely in the Performance of Duty; it will be hard for us to judge that God should leave them so far in their last hour, that they should commit a Sin in which they should die, without any *place for, or possibility of Repentance*. The truth is no such fact can be done, but either by a *profane person*, or by one who hath been an *Hypocrite*; who, though he hath mocked God, and deceived Men by a Profession, yet the root of the matter hath not been in him. When therefore we see any, who to all appearance hath lived in *the Fear and Dread of God*, come to such a sad end, it is most charitable to judge that he or she was not themselves when they did it.

2. *Br.* But

2. *Br.* But (which indeed is the main thing I intended, and to which my Discourse hitherto on this Argument hath been but prefatory.) The terror of that Text, *No Murtherer hath Eternal Life*, ought to lay a Law upon every one of us *to use all imaginable means both to prevent and to resist so great a Temptation.* Now in the handling of this *Temptation* or *Motion* to so great an Evil, we will consider it,

1. In the *Efficient Causes.* Where we will consider what may be done to find out the *Principal Efficient Cause* in this *Temptaton.*

2. In the *seeming or appearing good*, which is usually by the *Tempter* made as a *Bait* to draw a Soul into this deadly Snare.

3. We will consider, *What is the most probable Means to be used either for the preventing Temptations of this Nature*, or for the repelling of them, if the Soul be already under the forcible Impressions of them.

CHAP. III.

CHAP. III.

What Care we had need *to take, for the prevention and reſiſting of Temptations to Self-Murther. From what Efficient Cauſes ſuch Temptations may be our Luſts: The World, the Devil; theſe ſometimes acting jointly. What Luſts ordinarily incline us to it. How to know if the Temptation be from a ſingle or a mixt Cauſe, and from what Cauſe it is.*

YOu have heard from my former Diſcourſe, That *Temptations* are *Motions to Sin*, and that all ſuch Motions proceed either *from our own Luſts*, or *from the World*, or from our *grand Adverſary the Devil*; and that theſe three *Principal Cauſes*, ſometimes act *ſingly*, ſometimes *jointly*; and it is a matter of no ſmall moment, for a Chriſtian under the *power of a Temptation*, rightly to underſtand, from what hand his *Temptation comes*; Whether it be meerly the *Dictate* of

of his own Luſt, or whether it comes from *Men in the World*, or *whether it comes from the Devil*? From *one of theſe Caſes ſingly*, or *from two of them acting together joyntly*; and ſo the Temptation be a *mixed Temptation*. Nor do I think it will be very difficult to a diligent obſerving Chriſtian to make a true judgment in the Caſe. For the *Men of the World*, as Temptations of this Nature are not very ordinary from them, we ſhall (in theſe days of Light) ſeldom or never hear Reaſonable Perſons, ſerious and in earneſt one with another, perſwading them to deſtroy themſelves: So *they can make no ſuch Motions to us, but will be obvious to our Senſe.* *Job* heard his Wife, when ſhe ſaid unto him, *Curſe God and die*; Job. 2. 9. It is true, the Men of the World, may by *vexing* and *tormenting us*, be to us *indirect Cauſes* of ſuch a *Temptation*; but that ſignifieth nothing, the principal Efficiency in thoſe *Temptations*, muſt be *from our own Luſts*. So that the onely difficulty of Judgment in theſe Cauſes, will be to determine, *Whether ſuch Motions* or *Impreſſions flow meerly from our Luſts*, or *meerly from Satan*, or partly from *our Luſts*, and partly *from the Devil.*

1. I am not difficult to believe *that a Man or Woman may be Tempted to destroy him, or her self, meerly from his or her own Lust*, drawn away and enticed. I believe *Saul* was so, and *Ahithophel* was so. *Saul* saw he was like to come into his Enemies hand, and his *Lust of Impatience* prevailed upon him, to prevent it by a Self-Murther. *Ahithophel* had a Lust of *Ambition*, and was not *patient* of the *shame of being outwitted*, and defeated as to his Honour and Reputation: And this I take to be the Case of *Zimri*; 1 *Kings* 16. 18. Now the *Original Lust* which draws in these Cases, is, *An over eager desire of a greater portion of those which we count good things in this Life, then it will please God in the Wisdom of his Providence to allot us:* Whether they be *Honour* and Applause, *Riches* or a Plentiful Estate, *Ease* or *Personal Freedom* from *Misery* and *Torment*, &c. This prevailing in the Soul, when it seeth it is croſt in these desires, or is like to be crossed as to them; the Man or Woman, either *through fear* of what is like to befall him or her, or in an *heighth of discontent* and *impatience* for what hath befallen them; destroyeth him or her self. But now this cannot be in any Souls but such as are possessed of *Atheistical Principles*, and

and rooted in a *disbelief* of the Scriptures and the *whole Revealed Will of God* (if at the time they be in the exercise of their Reason.) The Reason is this: Because if they believe that there is a God, and that the holy Scriptures are the Word of God; which say, *No Murtherer hath Eternal Life*; they must believe, that by that Act of *Self-Murther*, they expose themselves to Ten thousand times greater Evils of *Shame*, *Misery*, and *Torment*, and *that for ever*; than they can possibly avoid by it. So as from hence is evident, that no *Child of God*, no Believer, none that hath any thing of the Grace of God in him, being in the use of his Reason, can possibly be *led away by his own Lust and enticed* to this Sin. Where this Temptation prevaileth and is the meer effect of Lust, it must be in an *Atheistical Heathenish Soul*, wholly under the Ignorance or Unbelief of the holy Scriptures, and what they Reveal concerning this Sin, and concerning *Eternal Life*: Such were the *Heathens*; such was *Ahithophel*, *Saul*, *Zimri*, *Judas*, &c. As to such, the Lusts of our *Irascible Appetite* (as the Philosopher speaks) may be oft times Temptations.

2. But Secondly, These Temptations

or *Motions to Sin*, may, and doubtless *very often do proceed from Satan singly*. Nature doth not so ordinarily say *Kill thy self*, as *spare thy self*, and truly when we consider, how Nature abhorreth its own dissolution, how naturally we flee from every evil and unpleasant thing, we may reasonably wonder, that ever any Man should from his own Lusts be moved and solicited to destroy himself: and no question but Nature must be in some disorder, and there must be a great conquest over it before it can be. It must be a great Good shewed us that must ballance the *Good of Life*; and a great *Evil*, that must ballance the *Evil of a Dissolution*. But certainly these Motions are very ordinary from the Devil, *he was a Murtherer from the beginning*; *John.* 8. 44. Now where this Temptation floweth *singly from the Devil*, it is easily discerned, whether he appeareth in any visible Shape, and dissembleth an *humane voice*, or worketh by a more *secret Impression upon our Spirits*; for if it floweth singly *from him*, the *sole effect of it* is *Horror*, *Terror*, *and Trouble*, to the Soul that is *disturbed* with it. The Soul admits it into no Council, takes no Pleasure in the Thoughts of it; deliberateth not upon it, suffereth it not to

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lodge within it for a Night: ſaith, *Get thee behind me Satan*; and though it may be the Impreſſion renewe:h upon it again and again, yet ſtill it meeteth with no better Entertainment: if once the Soul hath deliberated upon it, had Thoughts to hearken to it, been pleaſed with it; it is no longer a Single Temptation.

3. But indeed ordinarily Temptations of this Nature are *mixed Temptations*; with this difference,

1. Sometimes *Luſt moveth firſt*, and *Satan* falleth in with the Motions of that. Sometimes *the Luſt of Diſcontent*, *ſometimes a Luſt of Impatience.*

Men or Women are proud, and of high Spirits, aiming at high things, To be before, and to excel others, to live at a geeat Rate, or in great degrees of Honour and Applauſe; it may be they have lived ſo formerly, it hath pleaſed the Providence of God to *humble them* and bring them low, and out of eſteem; to Spoil their Reputation, *lay their Honour in the Duſt*, deveſt them of their Eſtates: they are not able to bear it, and entertain thoughts of putting an end to their Lives. You ſhall find Temptations of this Nature ſo far influencing the Servants of God, that although indeed they

have not adventured upon such wickedness, yet *they have prayed to God to take away their Lives.* Thus *Jonah*, to avoid the obloquy of a false Prophet, *Jonah.* 4. 3. *Therefore now, O Lord, take I beseech thee, my Life from me; for it is better for me to die then to live.* 2. Sometimes a *Lust* of *Impatience* under *present afflictions* prevaileth upon them, hence under great degrees of *pains and misery*, we shall find some prest with such sinful thoughts: and this again hath so far prevailed with Gods own Servants, that although we do not read that in the sense of them they had thoughts to kill themselves, yet we do find that they have *prayed God to put an end to their Lives*; you have two great instances in Scripture, that of *Job*, who Chap. 3. Curst the day of his Birth and *Job* 6. 8, 9. *Oh that I might have my Request! and that God would grant me the thing that I long for! even that it would please God to destroy me, that he would let loose his Hand and cut me off.* So *Elijah*, &c.

3. Sometimes the Lust of *Servile slavish fear*, when men and women have a *Prospect of some great Evils that are like to come upon them*, and are not able to bear the thoughts of them, nor to live in the

view

view of them. In this case we shall find Temptations also have prevailed upon Gods own People to *desire Death*, though not to be the instruments of their own Death. This was the Case of *Elijah*, 1 *Kings* 19. 4. *Jezebel* sending a message to him, had sworn by her Gods that by the next day she would kill *Elijah*, as he had done by Baals Priests. v. 3. v. 4. he goes into the Wilderness, *he goeth into the Wilderness* and *sits under a Juniper Tree, and requesteth for himself that he might die*; and saith, *It is enough now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my Fathers.* Now where any of these Lusts predominate at any time, the Devil doth very ordinarily join his strength with it, and makes frequent and violent impressions upon the Spirits of Christians; putting them upon the *murthering of themselves*; and where he meets with men or women that are ignorant or of base *Atheistical hearts*, who do not believe *there is a God*, or that there is such a thing as *Eternity*, either an *Heaven* or *Hell*, a place of Eternal happiness, or Eternal torment or misery, or an Immortal State of a Soul; it is not at all to be wondered that he doth very often prevail. For if they can but look

upon *death* coming upon them any way as a freedom from misery and the grave, as a place where *the wicked ceaſe from troubling*, where *the weary be at reſt*, where *the priſoners reſt together*, and *hear not the voice of the oppreſſor*; it is but natural to them to cry out, *Wherefore is Light given unto him that is in Miſery, and Life to the bitter in Soul, which long for death but it cometh not; and dig for it as for hid Treaſures; and rejoyce exceedingly, and are glad when they can find the Grave.* But now it being impoſſible that a Believer that knoweth the Scriptures and believeth them, and agreeth to the Immortality of the Soul and the torments of Hell, the truth of the *Worm never dying*, and the *Fire* that *never goeth out*, and that *all Murderers ſhall have their portion in the Lake where this Worm* this *Fire is*; ſhould ever look upon Death and the Grave in this dull notion. Satan can never prevail with him. So that no ſuch Soul, while he is poſſeſſe d of any Liberty to uſe his Reaſon, and to conclude from Principles, can poſſibly be prevailed upon.

2. Sometimes it may be, *The Motion may be firſt from the Devil*, who ſeeing a Man or Woman, in great pain or misery,

misery, or in great fears and expectations of misery, may come to it and say (as *Job*'s Wife said to him) *Doest thou still retain thy Integrity? Curse God and die.* I mean make some such Impressions upon a Man or Womans Spirit. This possibly Men and Women at first discern and receive with great abhorrence, cry, Get thee behind me Satan; tell their Friends and Neighbours of it, beg of them to pray to God for them; but the Devil reneweth his Motions and Impressions with great frequency, violence, and importunity, until at length their own Lusts incline them to hearken; either their over-eager desire to be out of their *fears* or out of their pain; and at some *more rest and quiet* than they can possible arrive at and come to: so as they yield.

CHAP. IV.

By what Seeming Good the Soul tempted to Self-Murther, may be drawn away and inticed. What good greater than Life. Eternal Life a greater good. This

can bait no Believer to such an Act why. Immunity from some great Evil felt, or imminent, the onely appearing Good in the Case. A Case arising from a Souls being possest of the Doctrine of Election. Whether that can give this Temptation advantage? It is denied.

But it may possibly be worthy of our Inquiry, What can be a Bait fitting for such a Trap? He who is *tempted* (saith the Apostle) *is drawn away by his own lust and enticed*: No Man is enticed, but by some *appearing Good*. None can be *drawn away* from *a Good*, nor *enticed out of the possession of it*, but upon the *view of a greater Good*, possible or probable to be obtained by parting with that which is lesser. Now Life being in the *Eye of Nature* the greatest Good, *Skin for Skin* (saith the Devil) *and all a man hath, for his Life*. One would think the *Devil* could not shew a Man or Woman any thing, for the *obtaining* of which he should *deliberately* and *voluntarily* part with his Life.

To this I Answer two things,

1. Though

1, Though *Natural Life*, in *Pleasing Circumstances*, be the greatest *Natural Good*; yet *Life Eternal* is a more *Excellent Good*. So that if it be possible that a man should be cheated by his own heart, or by the Devil, so as to believe that the dispossession of himself of his *Natural Life*, shall bring him into the possession of an *Eternal Life*; he may upon that account be rationally perswaded to determine his own Life. Thus the Devil imposed upon some of the Heathens; who had by the Light of Nature but a dim Prospect of that *Life* and *Immortality* which the Apostle telleth us is *brought to Light by the Gospel*: Dreaming that an happy State of the Soul in another Life, was the common portion of all men, or at least of all that lived up in any degree to the Rules of *Moral Vertue*; and not understanding, that the *Wages of Sin was Death*, nor the right way to *Eternal Life*; nor that of the Apostle, *That no Murtherer hath Eternal Life abiding for him*, no more than abiding in him; they might easily be so cheated: as *Cleombrotus* and others. But it is not possible that a Believer (one I mean, who believeth the Scriptures) should be thus enticed: for by Faith he knows, That the

Law

Law is, *Thou shalt do no Murther, That no Murtherer hath Eternal Life. That the Murtherer* is one of those Sinners that *have their portion in the Second Death*: Rev. 21. 8. and therefore not in the Second Life.

2. Secondly, Though *Natural Life, in pleasing Circumstances, may be the greatest Natural Good*; yet this *Natural Life, as to particular persons, may be so ill circumstanced, that a present freedom from some Evil, may to a Natural Eye appear a much greater Good*; *in comparison of which even Life it self may be an Evil undesirable* and abhorred. Life is much rated by the happy or less happy Circumstances of it. Even Nature it self would not desire a Life of Continual and Extream pain. And indeed, This *Ease* and *Immunity from Evils*, which either at present oppress us, or hang over our heads, so that we have, or think we have them in a certain Prospect, not probable to be avoided, is the onely *appearing good* that can *entice us* to determine our own Lives. For Death depriving us of all Positive Sensible Good Things, such as Riches, Pleasures, Profits, Honours, Relations, all kind of Sensual Satisfactions. And this *Death* being

ing no way or means, and such a thing as cannot possibly appear to any but Heathens and Infidels, as any means to bring us to any *Eternal Good*; there remaineth nothing of any umbrage or Colour of Good in it, by which it is possible we should be cheated, but onely a *Supersedeas* from, or *Determination of those Evils, which we either think we have in a near and certain Prospect hardly avoidable, or under the pressure of which we groan, being burthened, and seek a Release from.* And if (as I shall have occasion enough hereafter to shew you) Death thus brought upon our selves by our own hands, will not be a productive of this Effect, but so far as we can possibly judge, bring us into a far deeper Gulf of Misery than what we are already in; and make our Case a thousand times more sad than it is already: We must conclude it is onely an *Appearence of Good* by which we are cheated.

Obj. But I hear some say, upon the Hypothesis of some, *That there is an Election of Grace, and that those who are chosen unto Eternal Life, cannot perish; why may not Men and Women destroy themselves, that they may be in Heaven: for if they be Elected, they shall be Saved.*

And

And if they be not Elected, let them live as long as they can, they shall be damned.

Sol. This may be ignorantly spoken, by such as know not the Scriptures, nor what they, who assert from the Scriptures the *Doctrine of Election*, do maintain: but it cannot be said by any understanding persons, who knoweth any thing of the Mind and Will of God in the Scriptures, or what they reveal as to the *Doctrine of Election.*

1. For I beseech you to consider, 1. *That nothing can be a Temptation to any, to deprive himself of the greatest natural good, but an apprehension of a certain enjoyment, of a greater good*; though it be granted that Eternal Life be certainly a greater good than a Natural Life, yet if I do not apprehend, that by departing out of this present Life, I shall certainly be put into the possession of that better Life; and by no other way so adequate I shall never be perswaded upon that Speculation, to part with this Life; for *good as good doth not move our appetite*, but as so apprehended by us.

2. Secondly that it is impossible, *that any one should apprehend, that by depriving himself of his Natural Life, he should be possessed*

poſſeſſed of an Eternal Life; for I pray obſerve me; ſuch an apprehenſion muſt be *bottomed* upon one of theſe things, 1. Either that *Eternal Life ſhall be the common Portion of all Men* after this Life, which indeed might be the apprehenſion of ſome Heathens, but cannot poſſibly be fancied by any Intelligent Chriſtian; for beſides that, the *Notices* we have of a State of *Eternal Happineſs* are very Imperfect, beſides ſuch as we have from the Goſpel, which the Apoſtle ſaith have brought *Life and Immortality to Light*. I ſay beſides this, the Scriptures plainly reveals, that there is an *Hell* as well as an *Heaven*, a State of *Miſery* as well as *Happineſs*; that ſome ſhall riſe to *Shame and Contempt*, as others to Life and Glory. 2. Or elſe Secondly, It muſt be founded upon this. *That they know that they are elected unto Life*: For I appeal to the *Reaſon* of any perſon. Suppoſe that I know and am aſſured, *that God hath choſen ſome from before the Foundation of the World, to whom he will give Eternal Life*; and admit again *that I am equally aſſured that no perſon ſo choſen of God unto Eternal Life, can Eternally Periſh*; yet what pretence is here for me, unleſs I have *alſo an aſſurance* or *perſwaſion, that I am one of thoſe whom God hath from*

from Eternity so chosen, and therefore cannot perish; to throw away the greatest temporal good I have (*viz.* my Life) *to obtain that greater supernatural good of Life Eternal; whilest I am in the certain possession of the former, and have no assurance of the latter.* Now it is impossible, that any one, that hath deliberations in his heart to commit so great an Evil, and so ripened as to resolve to do it; should have any *Assurance*, or any certain apprehensions, that he is one of the *Elect of God*, or *that he was ever born of God*: The Reason is this, because *all such Assurance must be from the Word of God, and the Spirit of God; setting home the Word of God upon the Soul, and conforming the Soul to the Image of God.* Now the Word of God saith, *No Murtherer hath Eternal Life*, it saith *Murtherers shall have their Portion in the Lake which burneth with Fire and Brimstone; which is the second Death.* So far is it from saying that any persons, that deliberate, and do such things, are *the Elect of God*, and shall certainly have Everlasting Life: So as the Notion of *Election* and its *certainty*, and of *Effectual Grace*, and its abiding in the Soul, cannot possibly give any reasonable advantage to this Temptation; proposing to the Soul

that

that deliberateth, and is about to do any such thing, any such *Supereminent Good* as Eternal Life, to be obtained, by *parting with this Life*, without any direction from God, who is the Lord of it: Nay it rather giveth the greatest discouragement imaginable, by threatning Eternal Death to those who do such things; and barring the Gates of Heaven against them.

3. Nay, Thirdly, admitting that Proposition to be true. *That if a Man be Elected, he shall certainly be Saved*; let him die when, and how he will: and *if he be not elected, he shall certainly Perish*: Yet neither can this give the least incouragement to so vile an Act, for so long as his heart is full of so great a Wickedness, *he can have no grounded Apprehension, that he is elected*; and so cannot be allured to the Action, by the apprehension of enjoying Eternal Life; which is a far greater good than the life he parteth with. So neither can any be certain that *he is not chosen unto Life*, and if he could be certain of that, yet no mans reason can dictate to him, that infinite *Torments and Misery* are a *lesser Evil* than *any of the Evils of this Life*; which in obedience to this Temptation, he would flee from, by putting a period to his days: Or that

it is eligible for him to throw himself into those Torments before the time. So that it is impossible, That the Notions of *Election* and *Pretension*, or the *certain Determination of Man, as to his Eternal Estate*, should give the least aid, and assistance unto this Temptation. But the onely *appearing good* that can entice any to hearken to a Temptation of this Nature, must be *a freedom* from *some present Evil*, or some *imminent Evil.*

CHAP V.

What is to be done by Christians, to prevent such Impressions. The First Direction, To take heed to our selves, as to the prevailings of Melancholly. What means to be used in order thereto. Natural to be directed by Physicians. The Reasonableness of the use of them in this Case Moral. Avoiding terrible Objects to our Senses. Solitude. Employing and diverting

verting our ſelves. Gods Practice with Elijah. *Religious Means, Reading the Word, Hearing, Prayer, the Efficacy of theſe Means in order to this end.*

I come now to what in this Diſcourſe I did chiefly intend: *viz.* To ſhew what is to be done in the Caſe of this Temptation; either for the *Preventing* theſe Impreſſions: Or, Secondly, for the Reſiſting of them, if we find they be come to Temptations. I will diſcourſe a little largely upon the Firſt Head, for as we ſay, *Preventing Phyſick is the Beſt Phyſick.* It doth at leaſt ſave the Patient a great deal of *Pain* and *Trouble.* And what we ſay in another Caſe, *Turpius ejicitur quam non admittitur hoſpes.* It is not ſo eaſie to caſt an Enemy out, who hath once got poſſeſſion, as to keep him out at firſt from ſuch poſſeſſion; it is true here. And here alſo I ſhall ſpeak to all. It is poſſible but one of many that is fallen under the burden of this *Temptation*; but there is none of us all, but for ought we know, may come under this Burthen, which others have found

too heavy for them to bear. The Question therefore is,

Qu. *What a Christian should do, that he may never be under this great affliction; that he may never be tempted to this great Evil of Destroying himself by his own Hands?* A thing which it may be you startle at and are now ready to say, as *Hazael* in another Case, *Am I a dead Dog, that I should do such things.* Yet it may so fall out, that as *Hazael* did, what he professed so great an abhorrence of; so you may do, or entertain thoughts to do, what now your thoughts seem to you at furthest distance; even as to this *horrid Temptation. He that yet standeth, had need take heed lest he falleth.* Nor will I promise you to give you so perfect Directions, as the Practice of them shall give you an infallible Security. It is impossible to tell you how far the Wisdom of God, may, or may not, think fit to try any of you; and in order to it, to let loose Satan against you: Nor how far Lust and Corruption may prevail in any of you. I shall onely advise the most probable means.

1. In the first place, *Take heed as to your Bodily Health, with respect to Melancholy*: Experience telleth us, That few

few Religious Souls are infested with these Impressions, but such as are cloistered in *Melancholick Bodies*. Melancholy prevailing, darkens our Reason, that we are not able to make true Conclusions from Gospel Principles; and the same Experience also tells us, That there are few, even Religious Persons, that fall into great Prevailings of *Melancholy*, if it abideth long upon them, but they have some or more Impressions of this Nature, although indeed, in some they be weaker, in others they be stronger. Some have them more often repeated, others more seldom. This therefore is highly to be attended by every good Christian, who dreadeth the thoughts of so dark an hour of Temptation as this is. For although (as I told you in the former part of my Discourse) I do believe every Child of God hath the Seed of God so far abideing in him, as he shall never murther himself; yet the prevailings of this Distemper may so far distract him (for ought I know) that he may *kill himself*, as well as one in another Distraction, by a Feavour, or the like, which taketh away the use of his Reason. And this is very sad and uncomfortable. Besides, if it should not rise so high, yet the best of

Christians may have a long trouble and disquietude given him from such motions and solicitations, though finally they do not so far prevail against him. If you therefore love your Souls, the *peace*, *quiet*; and *comfort* of them; if you would avoid the trouble and disturbance of these Temptations and Impressions, Take heed of the prevailings of this Humour. You will say to me, What can we do in this Case? I answer, There are *Natural* and *Moral*, or *Civil*, and *Religious Means* to be used, do not neglect them.

1. The *Natural Means* are *such Medicines or Prescriptions as Learned Physicians* (who are doubtless Gods Ordinance in this Case) *shall judge* fit *to direct* and *prescribe*. I have not without a great deal of trouble sometimes observed the stubbornness of some (in other things) intelligent Christians, as to this particular. O (they will tell you) Physicians can do them no good; God must cure, God must heal them: and who denieth but that, *It is God must heal them?* But it is every whit as rational, to say you will *eat no Meat*, or *drink no Drink*; it is God that must maintain your Souls in life; as to say, when you are under greater and more dangerous Bodily Di-

stem-

stempers, you will take no Physick, use no Means, because it is *God must heal you.* Because God must heal us, must he therefore work a Miracle in doing it for us? Or doth not God do it ordinarily by his Concurrence with Natural Means, in which he hath created a Natural Vertue, in order to that End. It is true sometimes Physicians prove of no value in the Case; but it is as true that very often God doth concur with, and bless Natural Means; and I have often known, that the use of Natural Means, in the beginning especially of these Distempers, where also this *Temptation* hath commenced with this Bodily Distemper, hath both removed the Distemper and the Temptation also. God will not please always to work certainly and infallibly with Means, that we may know that our Healings are from him.

There are besides these, Moral and Rational Means to be used; which though they do not as the other, purge out the *peccant humour*, yet hinder the Increase and Effects of it. Let me name some of them:

1. *Take heed about imploying your Senses about terrible Objects*; either seeing Objects that are apt to affright and terrifie,

or hearing Relations or Diſcourſes of that Nature, or Reading Books upon Subjects apt to affright and terrifie. When Men and Women are under this Diſtemper, Objects very ordinarily make very deep Impreſſions upon our Fancy; and as we ought at all times to avoid Objects that may feed our thoughts inclinable to the obedience of other Luſts, ſo under this Diſtemper we are equally concerned to divert our Senſes from any Objects which may feed our Imaginations, with what may cauſe *exceſſive and immoderate fears and terrors in us.* Upon the ſame reaſon, that perſons who find in their hearts diſpoſitions to Levity and Wantonneſs, and the Luſts of the Fleſh, ought with *Job* to make *a Covenant with their Eyes, that they will not look upon Objects*, that may miniſter Fuel to their Luſts: Yea, and with their Ears too, that they will not hear any Diſcourſes of that Tendency: The Melancholick Perſon, being naturally inclined to an exceſs of *Fear* and *Sorrow*, ought to make a Covenant with his or her *Exteriour Senſes*, that they will not fetch in, or receive any Objects that have an aptitude, or fitneſs in them, to increaſe *Fears* and Exceſſive *Sorrow* and *Sadneſs*, *&c.* 2. *Take*

2. *Take heed of Solitude*, and delighting too much to be alone. It is usually said that *every one who is alone* (*much alone*) *proves either a God* or a *Devil to himself*. There is nothing of more advantage to a Man or Woman, if they be in health and under no disturbances of Mind and Spirit, than to be alone: It was wont to be said by a great *Roman*, *That he was never less alone, then when he was alone.* A Good Christian in clear Circumstances, is never more with God then when he is alone, nor doth ordinarily ever enjoy more of God. But the case is quite contrary if one be under the prevailings of this Distemper, He is never more exposed to *Temptations*, he is never more baited by the Devil then when he is alone: Solitude is by no means advisable in an hour of Temptation: I observe, *Matth.* 4. 1. That when Christ was to be tempted by the Devil, he was *by the Spirit carried into the Wilderness.*

3. *Divert thy self by Imployment what thou canst.* The great Evils which hazard the Soul under this Distemper, arise *from the too much fixation of the thoughts upon some particular terrible Objects.* Hence whatsoever is proper to divert the thoughts,

that they pore not too much upon such terrible things which are most obvious to them, is a very rational mean to be used in order, if not to the rooting out of the Cause, yet to the preventing the sad Effects of this Distemper. Hence you shall observe in that Story of *Elijah*, 1 Kings. 19. That God would neither suffer him to be *Alone*; nor to be *out of Imployment*; both which he seemed to seek: v. 4. *He goeth a days Journey into the Wilderness, and sitteth under a Juniper Tree*; there he beggs of God to *take away his Life*, and lyes down and sleepeth; v. 5. God sends an *Angel*, which cometh and *toucheth him*, and bids him, *Arise and Eat*; v. 7. He sends an *Angel the second time*, and bids him *Arise and Eat*; and sends him to *Horeb*. Still he was in his *Melancholick Fit* and goeth *into a Cave*. God v. 9. comes to him a third time, and saith to him, *What doest thou here Elijah?* v. 13. he lingers still, and standeth in the *Mouth of the Cave*. There cometh a Voice to him again, saying, *What doest thou here Elijah?* Methinks God himself in that Chapter prescribes unto persons under these Distempers what to do, and to their friends and relations what they should do, as to them

and

and for them, by all means to avoid *Solitude* and to drive them out from their pleasing Solititudes; and to imploy them and divert them: God sends *Elijah* a Journey, v. 15. to *Damascus*, to anoint *Hazael King of Syria*; and to anoint *Jehu King of Israel*: Other directions of this Nature I leave to Physicians.

3. Lastly, *Religious Means is by no means to be neglected*; for as the blessing of all Means, by which Remedy is given us for any Diseases, even those which are most obvious in their Causes, Effects and Cures, depend upon him, whose name is, *The Lord that healeth us*: So more especially as to this, the Causes of which are so various, the Effects so uncertain, and the Cure so difficult; that I doubt whether any yet have wrote satisfactorily (to more considerate persons) in the Case. There seems to be much hidden even from the Wisest Naturalists, and to be θεῖον τι, something Divine; beyond what the Acutest Wits and Reasons have discovered. I would therefore have such persons by no means omit *Reading and Hearing the Word of God. Sorrow maketh an heart to stoop*, (saith Solomon) *but a good word makes it better.* I have heard a Story of a Good Woman under a great Temptation

tion to deſtroy her ſelf, and going about to drown her ſelf, firſt taking her Bible, and caſually opening it, and caſting her Eye on a Text declaring the great Mercy of God to Sinners, ihe preſently ſaith, to her ſelf, *Nay, if it be ſo, I will not drown my ſelf yet.*

And if there were nothing (as certainly there is very much) by perſons to be expected upon the Promiſe of God, to perſons performing their Duty, in Reading and Waiting upon God in his Ordinances; yet I know no Reaſon but the thoughts of perſons may be diverted by what they Read and Hear in Sacred and Holy things, as well as other things which have not ſuch a Stamp and Impreſs of God upon them. *Prayer* is the general way of *Application* and *Addreſs* unto God in all Caſes, if we know no *due Means*, Prayer obtains Wiſdom and Direction from God; if we uſe *due Means*, Prayer obtaineth a Bleſſing from God upon the uſe of them: If ſomething muſt be done for us beyond the *Natural Force* and *Vertue of Means*, *Prayer* obtaineth that from God. But I ſhall add no more to this firſt Direction, upon which I had not inlarged ſo far, but that I find it ſo hard to perſwade perſons under this *Temptation* that

that it is advantaged by this *Natural Distemper*; than which there is nothing more evident upon all Experience, that both this and another Sore Temptation, as to which I shall speak something in my following Discourse, are all highly advantaged and promoved by it; and therefore a taking heed to our selves in this Case, is also very necessary to prevent them: and I intend when I speak to them, to add little more upon this Argument, but onely refer to what I have said in this Chapter; which hath made me willing once for all to discourse it more largely. Now I proceed.

CHAP. V.

A Second Direction to prevent Temptations of this Nature. The Mortification of Pride. The Influence which Pride hath upon the Soul, in order to the raising or promoving such thoughts in us; as it is the great Mother of Discontent, upon Gods altering our External Circumstances. Considerations to be digested, in order to the keeping

ing

ing of our Souls in a mean o-pinion of our Selves.

2. IN the Second place, *Take heed of Pride*, live in the Mortification of that Luſt. *Solomon* hath three Wiſe Sentences in his Book of *Proverbs*, which we ſhould have at all times ingraven in our hearts. *Prov.* 11. 2. *When Pride cometh, then cometh Shame.* Prov. 16. 18. *Pride goeth before deſtruction: and an haughty ſpirit before a fall.* The laſt is, Prov. 29. 23. *A mans pride ſhall bring him low:* I do not think that there are three other pieces of the revealed Will of God, that are more verified in daily experience than theſe are. I do not know any Soul that is more expoſed to Temptations to Sin, nor oftner falleth into them, nor that is more expoſed to Temptations for Sin, than the *Proud Soul.* Pride is a corruption that ſwelleth a man in the opinion of a mans own merit, worth, and excellency, and conſequently breedeth in him an impatience of any thing that ſhould leſſen his eſtimation in the ſight of others. *Ahithophel* was a proud Man, and not able to bear his diſgrace at Court, but chuſeth rather to hang himſelf. Whenſoever any *preſent ſhame*, or fear of future ſhame, any

any degradation, or loss of *honour* and *repute in the World*, gives a rise to such motions as these in our hearts, to destroy our selves; or gives the Devil any advantage to enforce such impressions upon us, *Pride* is the bottom of it. It is therefore highly advisable for Christians, *To be cloathed with Humility*, to put on *Humbleness of Mind*, as the Apostle exhorteth. An humble Soul is hardly taken in this Snare of the Devil. Two or three things will much contribute to this humbleness of Mind. 1. *The consideration of what we are, what we brought with us into the World, and from whom we had it.* 2. *The Consideration of what we deserve.* 3. The Consideration, how *little a thing it is to be great in the World.* I say, 1. The Consideration of *what we are, what we brought with us into the world; and from whom we had our all that we have.* Lord what is Man, that he should be lifted up? He is made up of two essential parts, *The Soul and the Body.* Our Philosophy teacheth us, *That all reasonable Souls are equal*, nor indeed is there any pretence in reason for any inequality originally in them. And are not our Bodies so also; are they not all Dust, and such as must return to Dust?

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Are they not all made of Clay? Have ſome Bodies a *more beautiful colour*, more *ſymmetrical* and *proportionable parts* than others? Do ſome Souls diſcover more excellent Parts and Endowments, through the better Conſtitution and Complexion of Bodies? Have ſome of us more Credit and Reputation in the World, more Riches, and a greater portion of this Worlds Goods than others? Is any thing of this from our ſelves? Have we then built our own Bodies? Have we given them their Beauty or Symmetry? Have we ſo much as made one Hair of our Heads White or Black? Or added ſo much as one Cubit to our Stature in the World, in reſpect of Honour, Riches, and Reputation? Did we bring any of theſe things into the World with us? Can we carry them out of the World with us? *If we have received them*, why do we glory, *why are we proud of them, as if we had not received them?* Let others honour and admire us for them, we have no reaſon to admire our ſelves, nor to think highly of our ſelves; let us look to the *Rock from which we were hewen, and to the hole of the Pit out of which we were digged.* 2. But then (Secondly) let us conſider *what we have deſerved.* The thin gs

things upon which we value our ſelves, as thinking they make us to ſtand upon the higher ground, were neither *hereditary to us*, nor have they been *purchaſed by us*, by any Merit, of him who hath been our Benefactor as to them. The Apoſtle putteth them together, *Proud, knowing nothing*; 1 *Tim.* 6. 4. and truly ſo it is, the Man or Woman that is *proud*, is one that *knoweth nothing*. Knoweth nothing? How can that be, when ordinarily a Mans *Knowledge* is that which *puffeth him up* (it being indeed of any common and indiſtinguiſhing mercy, the nobleſt thing wherein a Man or Woman can differ from another) the Apoſtle in another place expoundeth this, when he telleth us, *That he who thinketh that he knoweth any thing, knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know it*; 1 Cor. 8. 2. But this is certainly true, that the *Proud Man or Woman knoweth nothing in things that are Spiritual.* Or if he or ſhe have ſome *Notions of Spiritual Things*, they know nothing of them, *as they ought to know them*; they have not digeſted that knowledge by any *ſerious Meditations*, they do not believe it. Is it poſſible that any one ſhould be lifted up in an Opinion of himſelf above others, who looks to the Rock from

from which he is hewed, and to the hole of the pit out of which he is digged, that he is the same *Clay*, the same *Dust* with another; though it hath pleased the Potter to order him to be a Vessel of more External Honour, and his Neighbour a Vessel of more Dishonour in the World: Or that any one should exalt himself above what is the Will of God concerning him, thinking that God doth not deal by him as he hath deserved; who knoweth, *That he was a Child of wrath by Nature*: That he hath made himself much more so, by his actual Disobediences: That he is punished seven times less than he hath deserved. 3. Then consider, *How little a thing it is to be great in the World.* It signifieth nothing as to our better part, but mischief for the most part. The Soul of Man is not bettered by *Riches* or *Honour*, or any of those good things which affect us, as to our outward Man. It signifieth nothing, as to the *Eternal State*, either of Soul or Body, and as to the outward Man in this Life, which alone hath any concern in these things. They are so incertain, we are set in such slippery places, while we stand upon these Mountains of Ice and Glass, that no considerate Soul can

can justly value himself upon them; but pray, O pray for an *humble low Spirit*. There is indeed a *natural lowness and demission of Mind*, and that is a great happiness, where God doth give it unto any. A naturally high and haughty Spirit is exposed to greater Temptations than another that is naturally of a *low* and *mean Spirit*; as the tall *Cedar* and *Oak* is more exposed to boisterous Winds than the poor Shrub. There is also a *Moral Humility*, a lowness of Mind and Spirit caused from *Education*, and the *due Digestion* of Moral Principles, and this also doth something. But there is also an *Habit of Humility*, into which the Soul is wrought by the Holy Spirit of God; making the Word of God to take hold of the Heart: when the *Will of God* is that which maketh the Heart to stoop, and brings it to a submission to its portion. This is of all other the more excellent, the most *Divine*, the most *Effectual*. Now there is nothing more effectual to arm a Soul against this Temptation than this *lowliness of Mind*; nothing more exposing the Soul to this Temptation than that *habit* which is contrary to it. *Pride* and *height of Spirit*, is the great Mother of *Discontent*, when it ceaseth to be with us, as it formerly

merly was. Hence it is that Men and Women conclude, they had better not be, than be *poor* and in *misery*; it is better for them to put an end to their own days, than to be exposed to *shame*, *contempt*, and *obloquy*. It is therefore of very high concernment to all of us that would be out of the danger of these Fiery Darts, to *study humility*, while we are in health, while we are in the highest circumstances of prosperity, to be thinking of a lower state and condition, and meditating of the vanity of the high things of the World, the incertainty and slipperiness of them, the littleness of them under their greatest appearances; to be thinking what poor Creatures we are, how little we brought into this world with us, how little any of us have deserved at the hands of God, to feed our selves continually with Meditations which may keep us in a low opinion of our selves.

CHAP

CHAP. VII.

A Third Direction for the preventing of this Temptation. The possessing of our Souls with Patience under, and arming of our Souls against, all manner of Discontent. The Mischief of Discontent, the Excellency of Contentment and the usefulness of it.

3. IF we would keep our selves from the Assaults of this Temptation, we must make it our business to learn *in all estates to be content: To possess our selves with Patience, and arm our selves against all manner of Discontent.* No Soul satisfied, and contented with his or her state, and condition; falleth into this *Snare of the Devil*; it is always the effect of *Discontent*: Now Discontent is ordinarily bottomed in *Pride*, but possibly not always. St. *Paul* telleth us, *Phil.* 4. 11. *I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to*

be abased, and I know how to *abound*: *every where*, *and in all things I am instructed*, *both to be full*, *and to be hungry*, *both how to abound*, *and suffer need*. There is no such *Antidote* as this against the Poison of this Fiery Dart: The Temptation lyeth here, *Better be out of the World any way*, *then endure this Misery*, *then be exposed to this Shame*, *then come into the hands of such Enemies*. But the Soul that hath possessed it *self with Patience*, that hath learned in *every Estate to be Content*, and hath brought it self into a willingness that God should chuse its Lot, and carve its Portion, for it is Armed as with a Coat of Male; no Dart of this Nature can possibly penetrate such a a Soul. And suffer me to tell you, this will be a Lesson hardly learned, if once the Evil be come upon you; when the Sense of the present Evil naturally stirreth up *Passion* in us: of so unspeakable a Consequence is it to have our Wills *subdued to the Will of God*, to that degree that it shall perfectly rule over us. In matters of Action we sometimes may be at loss, doubting *what the will of God is*, and what we ought to do; but now in any Case of *Suffering*, the *Will of God* is clear, there can

can be no diſpute about it: There can be no *Evil of Puniſhment in a City*, or in a Family, but *God muſt be the Author* of it; it muſt be the *Will of God* that ſuch or ſuch a Perſon ſhould *come to Poverty*, come into *Diſgrace*, be expoſed to *Shame and Contempt*; that this. or that Man or Woman ſhould be Racked and Tormented with ſuch a *Diſeaſe*. Now our Buſineſs muſt be, to bring our Wills to the Will of God; nor muſt this be ſtudied with reference to a particular Caſe, for who can tell what ſhall befall him; but to learn with Saint *Paul*, *in all things to be content*, to have an Heart ready in all Eſſaies, in all Contingences of this Life, to comply with the Divine Will: Not that it is poſſible, for a Chriſtian ſo far to ſubdue himſelf, that it ſhall not at all *reluct*, nor wiſh it it ſelf to be in a better Condition; but ſo far, that the *Spirit ſhall get the Victory*, and Conquer the Motions of the Fleſh, and the Heart ſhall prefer the Will of God to its own Will; and this is a great buſineſs, to bring the Soul of a Man to this paſs. And in order to this, there is nothing ſo much to be ſtudied as *Humility* and the *Mortification of Pride*: For as *Solomon* ſaith, *Onely by*

Pride comes Contention. So give me leave to tell you, Onely from Pride cometh a Diſcontent at the Condition wherein God hath ſet us. For why is the Man or Woman diſcontented? But becauſe he or ſhe thinketh he or ſhe is *unworthily dealt with, and hath not according to what they have merited.* It would be a far too great undertaking for me in a branch of Application, to direct means in order to this *Contentment*, and propound Rational, or Spiritual Conſiderations, which duly digeſted, with the Bleſſing of God upon them, may work the heart into this frame; there have been whole Volumns that have been written upon it by Divines of all ſorts. I ſhould onely commend one to you, written in our own Language: It is Mr. *Borroughs* his Book called, *The Rare Jewel of Chriſtian Contentment*: where enough is ſaid upon this Argument, upon the due digeſtion of which there will be found nothing wanting but *Prayer on our ſide*; for the great Work muſt be the Lords: who alone can bow and change the Will of Man, and work it into a compliance with the Will of God. Our *Paſſions*, ſince Man in the Fall loſt the Reins and Government of them, are grown

grown too hard for our Reaſon: I ſhall onely tell you, *That a Diſcontented Spirit is the Devils great Advantage in the forcing of this Dreadful Temptation.* No Man can poſſibly be under the power of this Impreſſion, but that Man onely who is perſwaded, *That it is better not to be, then to be ſo Miſerable as he is in his preſent State and Condition.*

And hence it is, that although Godly Men and Women may often fall under the moleſtations of this Temptation, yet they ſeldom fall under it (I will not ſay *never*, but I ſay *ſeldom*) becauſe although their Wills are not fully ſubdued to the Will of God, yet they are generally ſo far ſubdued to the *Divine will*, that the Devil ſeldom getteth this Advantage againſt them, ſo as they ſhall commit ſuch a Sin.

CHAP. VIII.

A Fourth Direction for the preventing of this Temptation. The Increase of Faith, and Mortifying Unbelief. As to the Being of God, his Providence, his Promises. What Unbelief advantageth this Temptation. What Faith prepareth the Soul against it. Three particulars instanced in. An Explication of them and of the Forces of this Direction.

4. FOurthly, *Endeavour to promove the habit and work of Faith in your Souls, and to subdue Unbelief.* It is the Apostles Exhortation, *Heb.* 3. 12. *Take heed Brethren, least there be in any of you an Evil Heart of Unbelief, in departing from the Living God.* To depart from the Living God, is to *depart from the Law of God*; from the Rule which he hath set us to guide our Conversation: *Thou shalt do no Murther*, or *Thou shalt*

not

not Kill, is a part of that *Rule* (you know.) Now it is *Unbelief* which gives a Man any Incouragement to a departure from God, in any thing, much more in this: *Unbelief*, signifies a *not agreement* to the Propositions of the Word *Revealing* the *Will of God*: Or *a Distrust in God for the fulfilling of his Promises, whether relating to special Providence*, or *special Grace*, or *Eternal Life*. Study therfore to be Rooted and Grounded in the Faith; that you may firmly Believe these things:

1. *That there is a God, whose Right it is to Rule and Govern us, to Order us and our Affairs and Conditions, and to dispose of us; and who will one day Judg us, and deal with us according to what we have done.* Whosoever it is that liveth not under this Conviction, must needs think himself *in his own Power*, and that he may do with himself what he pleaseth; his Tongue is his own and he may speak, his Hands are his own and he may do what he list, and his *Life* is his own and he may deny himself in it, and throw it away as he pleaseth; for to whom should he be accountable for it? O therefore set God always before your Eyes, possess your selves

ſelves that you are not *your own*, but Perſons under Authority, and upon whom a Superiour Being hath a *Superintendancy*; you will ſay, *Are we dead Doggs, that we ſhould think any thing contrary to this*? Thus we think: But the Truth is, we profeſs an aſſent and agreement to many *Propoſitions*, which are not ſo faſtned upon our Hearts, ſo rivetted in our Souls, as they ought to be. For it muſt be a mighty inordinate Act, and contrary to the Dictate of all Reaſon, for a Man to undertake the diſpoſal of that over which he hath no Dominion, and for the diſpoſal of which he muſt be accountable unto a Superiour. Indeed there is ſomething of *Atheiſm* in every Sin, but there muſt be abundance of *Atheiſm* in this Sin: It is impoſſible that while a Man entertaineth Thoughts to deſtroy himſelf, he ſhould fixedly believe, *that he is not at his own diſpoſal as to this Life*; *but at the diſpoſal of God*, and he ſuch a God as is to be his Judge; and whom will one day call him to Account, as well for *what he hath done* with the *Life* which he gave him, as with the *Eſtate*, *Parts*, &c. which he gave him. I would therefore never have a man think that he ſufficiently be-

lieveth

lieveth this first Principle of all Duty and Religion, but be ever whetting it upon his Heart: *That God is*, and what a God he is.

2. *That every Man and Woman hath a Spiritual Part, an Immortal Soul, that can no more be extinguished with the Body, then Eat, or Drink, or Sleep with it, but goeth to an Eternal Existence when it is seperated from the Body: Where the Body raised up from the dust, shall one day meet it and be united to it, and with it either suffer Eternal Torment, or enjoy Eternal Happiness, according to what it hath done in this Life.* Certainly no Rational Being, no Man could possibly entertain a Thought to *Kill himself*, if he were firmly perswaded, *That it is a thing impossible for him to determine his own Being.* We cannot *desire* nor attempt to go about what we are fully perswaded is an impossible atchievement. A thing impossible to be obtained, our Reason will not suffer our Mind to run upon, or our Hearts to run out after things which we clearly apprehend are not possible in Nature. Now admitting these Principles, That Man is something more then *Flesh and Blood animated*, *That he hath a Spiritual Part*, that this

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it is *Immortal*, and *cannot Periſh with the Body*; *but when it parteth from the Body goeth into Eternal Manſions, either in Happineſs or in Miſery: That the Body after Death ſhall revive again in the Reſurrection, and there both the Soul and Body of every Man and Woman ſhall be again united and make one Perſon; and ſhall both together enter an happy or miſerable Eternity.* I ſay admitting this, it is impoſſible for a Man to determine his Being, all he can poſſibly do is to *determine his Being in this World.* He can neither by ſuch *Act* determine his *Being* nor yet his *Miſery*; he may determine indeed his *Miſery* as to *this Life*, but his Soul will then but enter into a ſtate of Ten thouſand times more Miſery in another World; and there will be a time after the revolution of a few years, when his Body ſhall return to Ten thouſand times more Miſery than it ever felt in this World. Now certainly no Perſon, under any command or conduct of Reaſon, can poſſibly be induced to attempt a thing *impoſſible*, to deliver himſelf from any Evil: Nor yet *throw himſelf into an infinitly worſe ſtate*, to deliver himſelf from a *preſent bad eſtate.* All the Entertainment therefore which ſuch Tem-

Temptations have in our Hearts, must be advantaged from *Unbelief* of these great Principles; which indeed are the Foundations and Principles of all Religion. Labour therefore, for as much as in you lies to Root your selves in the belief of these things, that you may not have the least doubt or hæsitation of, in your Hearts with relation to them: Live in the daily *Meditation* of them, suffer not your Souls to call them in Question, be acquainted with those Portions of Holy Writ, where the *Revelation* of these things is clearest to you. Take heed of Unbelief as to these things.

3. A Third thing, as to which the Soul should be fully perswaded, that will avoid the dint of this *Temptation*, is as to *the Truth of the Holy Scriptures in the general, so of those Portions of them in particular*; which reveals the *Will of God* as to the *preservation of our own Lives and the Lives of others, and the Wrath of God against such as commit Sins of this Nature*: Such as those *Gen.* 9. 6. *Num.* 35. 32. Thou *shalt not Kill*, No *Murtherer hath Eternal Life*, and all such as express the greatness of the Sin of *Murther*; for it is but an easie Conclusion of *Reason* from these Principles,

If

If I ought not to *Kill another*, *I ought much less to Kill my self*: If I ought to *preserve the Life of my Neighbour*, surely *I ought to preserve my own Life*: If I ought to preserve *my Chastity*, to *preserve my Vessel in Honour*, surely I ought not to *dash it in pieces*: If I ought not to maime or dismember my self, surely I ought not to destroy my self. The truth is, no Soul can possibly be guilty of this Sin, who either doth not in whole disbelieve the Scriptures, or in whose Heart the disbelief of them doth not prevail to a very high degree at that time when he is prevailed with by any Temptation to do such a thing.

But there is also another *Unbelief* which must be predominant in the Soul at that time when it is prevailed upon by this Temptation, and that is a *Distrust in God* for the *fulfilling of his Promises*; either with relation to *special Providence*, or *special Grace*, or *Eternal Life*. Those who are in any Measure acquainted with the Holy Scriptures, know that they are full of many great and precious Promises, as to Eternal Life, and also as to this Life. As to *Eternal* Life, made under such Conditions, and upon such Terms as his infinite Wisdom thought fit

to

to Prescribe and Limit. Those, as to this Life, are of various sorts, many of them relating to an afflicted state; *That he will put Strength into us: That he will lay no more upon us then he wilt inable us to bear:* That *he together with the Temptation, will also give an happy issue*; and many more of like import: as to which, the Soul that *Trusteth God*, and in which the Exercises of such Trust and *Confidence* in God, are *lively, and vigorous*, can never be Guilty of this Sin; for how shall that Soul go about to deliver it out of a Misery, which believeth that God will in his own time deliver it, and in the mean time Support, Uphold, and Comfort it, and make its Affliction issue in Good, and for its advantage; working for it a far more Eternal and exceeding Weight of Glory: Or how shall that Soul Trust in God for Pardon of Sin, and Eternal Life, which knoweth that *Repentance and Faith*, are the ordinary means prescribed by God for obtaining these things, and *do the last Act of his Life of such a Nature* as leaveth no room to be renewed by Repentance; and is such as God hath said, None that doth it hath Eternal Life. So that as it is apparent that this *Temptation* is advantaged

taged by nothing so much as *Atheism* and *Unbelief*, so there is no such Antidote against it as *vigorous Habits and Acts of Faith*: Nor is it possible that a *believing Soul* should be under the Power and Prevailings of it, while it keepeth under the Conduct and Command of Reason.

CHAP. IX.

An Holy Life and Conversation an excellent Preparative to this Spiritual Combate. This opened. Terrours of Conscience for Sin, oft times one great cause of such Thoughts. These not ordinary, but for great Sinnings, some more notorious Acts of Ungodliness, or of Unrighteousness, great Sinnings against Light, &c.

5. *Fifthly*, There is no better Preparative for this Spiritual Combate, *then an Holy Life and Conversation.* Although the Holiest Men alive are not exempted

exempted from this Fiery Dart (even Christ himself heard the Devil say (*Cast thy self down*) yet you shall observe these Temptations *mostly fall upon Men of loose Lives and Conversation*, at least *do most ordinarily prevail against such.* The ordinary Motive that prevaileth with Souls to do this thing, *is the avoiding of some great Evil which either they have in prospect, or feel the burden of.* Now this Evil is either *more External*, such as *Slavery* and falling into the hands of Enemies, This made *Saul* fall upon his own Sword, and *Cato* kill himself: Or horrible bodily Pains and Tortures; being exposed to some shameful Death, *&c.* Or else they are *more Internal*, such as *Horrours and Pangs of Conscience.* They are rare Instances, that either *Holy* or Civil History gives us of Persons putting an end to their own Lives to avoid *Imprisonment, Shame*, or *Tortures from Men*; and not many that we have of Persons, who in *Terrible Bodily Pains*, *have exposed to the* Prevailings of this Temptation. Now these *Terrours* and *Pangs of Conscience* arise *from the Souls Reflections upon its Guilt in respect of Sin.* Thus the Scripture tells us *Judas hang'd himself*, crying out, *he had betrayed Innocent*

Blood. Thus History tells us *Pontius Pilate* killed himself; and thus we Read of many others in History. And although there be no Sin so little, but if God setteth it home upon the Conscience and supporteth not the Soul with his Grace, it is able to drive the Soul to this desperate issue; yet it is not ordinary for Sins of a more minute Nature, and such as the best of Men commit, to be followed with such horrours as seize the Spirit of a Man, or for Satan to take such an advantage from them. The reflections which produce this effect, are usually upon some Sins of a more then ordinary Tincture; and that have had some more eminent circumstances of Aggravation: From whence it followeth that a *Godly and Righteous Conversation*, *Religious* towards God, *Just* and *Righteous* towards Men, is one of the best Preservatives from the violence of this Temptation. A *Profane Atheistical Blasphemous Person* is highly exposed to the *Impetus* of it, so is any, who hath bin guilty of more notorious Acts of *Unrighteousness*, such as *Murther*, *Persecution*, high degrees of *Violence* and *Oppression*: For though it be true that God is able to pardon many Sins as

well as few, great as well as small, and the Promise extendeth to *all Sin* and *Blasphemy*, to *Scarlet* and *Crimson Sins*; yet we shall find it an harder thing to be beleeve in Christ for the *Remission of Sins* of *so high a Tincture*: Besides that, Courses of Sin of this Nature, have a very ill influence upon the Heart, *to blind*, and to *harden it*; so that poor Creatures under the Guilt of them are often more sensible of the Wrath of God due to those who commit such things, then of the *Evil and Filthiness of them.* O therefore flee such things as these are, you know not how far God for them may leave you to Satans *Buffetings* of this Nature; you know not what it is to Repent of them, nor how hardly the Soul that is under the Guilt of them is brought to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, or to hope in him for the free Pardon and Remission of them; or to arrive at any sense of the Pardon of them: In short, take heed of all bold sinnings against Light and Checks or Reverberations of Conscience. If we will not hearken to the lighter Checks and Dictates of Conscience, we are often and but justly repaid with the severer Terrours and Affrightments of

it, for our doing of such things contrary to its Dictates and lighter Admonitions: But the holy Man that walketh closely with God, that liveth up to his Light and Revelations of the Will of God, is very much out of this danger; and though he may have some impressions of this Nature, yet they rarely are advantaged from an aking Conscience in the sense of Guilt.

CHAP. X.

Directions for them who are already fallen under this Temptation. Melancholy to be evacuated by Natural Means. 2. The *Motive* is to be *considered, which usually is a freedome from some present or imminent Evil. Two things to be considered*: 1. *Whether it will free us, to destroy our selves?* 2. *Whether there be not*

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a more safe and certain way to be free?

I Have thus far onely prepared you against a wrestling with this Temptation and given you preventing Physick, (which indeed they say is best) and it is better indeed to keep such an Enemy as Satan is, Armed with this Dart, at a distance; then to trust to our own Strength in the hour of Combate: But possibly as to some poor Souls this counsel may come too late, the Enemy may be upon them: What shall be done in this Case? I shall conclude my Discourse, referring to this Temptation with some Advice of this Nature.

1. And here my first Direction must be of the same Nature as before: *The Evacuating of those Peccant Natural Humours of which the Devil takes advantage*; and this at the first. Physicians will tell you, That there is a *Melancholick Deliration*: Melancholy may so far prevail, as to put a Man or Woman out of the *Conduct* and *Guidance of his Reason*; and who knoweth what a Man in those Circumstances may do: and although it be true that Acts done in *Distractions* are not *Humane Acts*, and possibly shall not be

imputed to us, yet let me tell you that these are sad issues of our Lives, and oftentimes Men and Women are so rational by Times, and in some Acts, that it is a very hard judgment to be made by standers by, whether such Miserable Creatures, doing such an Act, do it under the Conduct of their Reason (for the avoiding of a great Misery as they suppose, which they feel or fear) yea or no. This therefore is the first thing to be done in this Case, for the Removal of those Rises and Advantages which the Devil takes from this Temperature of Body. When this is done,

2. The next thing to be attended, Is a just Enquiry *into the Motive which the Devil urgeth to us to induce us to such an Act*, that ordinarily *is the removing of our selves from the sense of some great Evil, which either is upon us*, or like some *black cloud, hangeth over our heads*, and *we apprehend is not avoidable:* for although we read of some amongst the Heathens, that had got some imperfect Notions of the Immortality of the Soul, and an happy Estate, into which it should enter after Death; out of hast to be there, put an end to their Lives: yet there

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are no Christians, but are better instructed, and know that although the Souls of Men and Women be indeed *Immortal*, and that there is a *Blessed Eternity* into which the Souls of some Men and Women shall enter; yet there is also a *Miserable Eternity*, into which the Souls of others shall go. And for the Blessed Eternity into which some shall enter, the way to it is directed by Gods Word, and not by our own Fancy; and that it is no way to do it to die in a sinful Act, which leaveth hardly any room for Repentance, and speaketh the greatest Unbelief imaginable. So that, I say, the general Motive prevailing with any to the least hearkening to this Temptation, is the removal of our selves from the *fear* or *present sense* of some *evils*, which either press or threaten us. This being found out, certainly there can be nothing imagined more effectual to deliver us from the *dint* of this *Temptation*, then seriously to *consider with our selves*. 1. *Whether the destroying our selves will effect that end, indeed delivering the Soul from such Evils?* 2. *Whether*, supposing that it would, *deliverance might not be hoped for another way; far more certain and more advantagious?* As to the First, *A Man*

or Woman must be more certain of his or her happy state after this Life, then it is possible a Soul should be that doth entertain such thoughts, or he can never be assured, that the doing of such an Act should deliver him from the Misery under which he groaneth. It is indeed very possible that a Soul should be under the *assurance of Eternal Life* (whatever the Papists say) but it is impossible that a Soul should be under this Assurance at the same time, having it in his Heart, and resolving to do that Act, as to which the Scripture hath said, *That he that doth it, shall not inherit Everlasting Life*, or *hath not Eternal Life.* Now admit the Soul not to enter into Life, he certainly *goes into the Lake that burns with Fire and Brimstone*; where *the Worm never dies*, the *Fire never goeth out.* For a Man or Woman to leap out of the Miseries of this Life into the Pit of Hell, to deliver himself from any degree of Misery, either felt or feared, is so wild and irrational an Undertaking, as no Soul under the guidance of Reason can do it, but one that believeth no Hell; so that it is an Act agreeing onely to an *Unbeliever*, or a *Mad-man*, an *Atheist*, or a *Man Distracted.* 2. But Secondly, Admit now that a *Man* or *Woman*,

man, deſtroying *him* or *her ſelf*, *would bring him or her a deliverance from Miſery in the Grave*; *Job* ſaith, *The wicked ceaſe from troubling*, the *weary be at reſt. The Priſoners reſt and hear not the Voice of the Oppreſſor, the Servant is free from his Maſter.* So then, if Mens Souls expired with their Bodies, Death would deliver them; it freeth the *Beaſt of the Field*, and all ſenſitive Creatures; admit it would ſo free a *Man* or *Woman*, which it will not, yet certainly *it is by no means elegible, unleſs we can be freed no other way, and to no better advantage.* Suppoſe a Man or Woman, under a painful fit of the Gout, or under an extremity of Pain in ſome particular Member or Joynt, ſo as the cutting off an Hand or a Leg, or a Joynt, will certainly cure him, yet who almoſt (if it be but as to the pulling out of a Tooth) will purchaſe his freedom from pain at that rate, till he or ſhe ſeeth that no other way will do. Thou art under a great degree of Miſery, *great bodily Pains or Torments*, or in danger of ſome great *Shame*, *Miſery*, *or Reproach*: Thou haſt a Temptation to free thy ſelf from the preſſure of it, by *deſtroying thy ſelf*, and (which is the beſt thou canſt fancy if thou beeſt an Atheiſt) *annihi-*

annihilating thy Being. But is there no other way than this for thy Relief? Is there not a *waiting upon God*, an exercising of *hope and confidence* in him? Is he not able to *support* and to *bear thee up* under these pressures? To make thy burthen light unto thee, and to take it off thy Shoulders when he shall think good? Hath he not promised that *he will not lay upon us more than he will inable us to bear*, that he *will be with us in the Fires, and in the Waters, that the Waters shall not drown us, nor the Flames kindle upon us?* If I can be delivered from an Evil, of which I am afraid, or which I feel a more certain and easie way, than that which I am pressed to use, which is both incertain and of greater disadvantage; doth not all imaginable Reason dictate to me the use of it? And certainly to a Soul possessed of the truth of what God hath revealed in his Word, and under the conduct of Reason, nothing need be added to repel so unnatural a Temptation as this is; whereas therefore some are shy that persons under the prevailing of Melancholy, should read Books of *Terrible Arguments*, or hear *Sermons* of the Wrath of God against Sinners, of *Hell and Judgement*. I do not think

think any Books opening the Scriptures, or any portions of Scripture, fitter to be read, or any Sermons fitter to be heard, by persons under these circumstances, then such Books, such Sermons, such Portions of Holy Writ, as most express the Wrath of God against Sinners, most livelily express the miserable estate of Souls in another World under the Wrath of God: Together with such as contain or explain the Promises of God, for Support, and Strength, and Help under, and Deliverance from, the greatest Pressures of Affliction and Misery. By the *reading* and *hearing* of the one (the Grace of God concurring) which is always requisite to make the Soul believe what it reads and hears, a Soul shall be deterred from such an undertaking from the rational consideration, *That there is no way for it to get out of its Misery*; and by the other, it shall be perswaded that there is a far nearer and more certain way of Relief for it, if it can but exercise a little Patience from the good hand of God, who is able to relieve it, and who hath promised, and is faithful. Which two points are of very great import for a Soul to be perswaded of, that it may stand against this fiery Dart,

and

and of that Nature, that it is impoſſible that any Soul in the full poſſeſſion and belief of them, ſhould ever liſten to this Temptation, ſo long as it pleaſeth God to keep it in the exerciſe of its Reaſon. Let therefore every Soul under this Temptation, make it its buſineſs to give it ſelf the fulleſt poſſeſſion of theſe Truths; for it is the *Unbelief* or *faint Belief*, of theſe things, that gives the leaſt advantage to the *roaring Lion*, thus ſeeking about to *devour Souls*. The more rooted a Soul is in the *Doctrine of Eternity*, both that which relateth to *damned Souls*, and that which relateth *to ſuch as ſhall be ſaved*, the more remote and difficult it will be, as to liſtning to any Temptation of this nature.

CHAP. XI.

Further Directions for Souls thus tempted. The avoiding of Solitude. The Study and Meditation of the Nature of the Covenant of Grace, in the Matter of

of it, the freeneſs of it, the ſureneſs of it, the well ordering of it in all things.

3. *Dir.* *Avoid Solitudes* and *Solitary Places*; I mentioned this before as a means to prevent prevailings of *Melancholy*, but let me a little farther inlarge upon that Argument. Indeed exceſſes of *Solitude* are by no means to be affected by Chriſtians, under the greateſt freedom of Body and Mind, tho nothing more conduceth to a Souls Health and Freedom in communion with God, then ſome juſt Meaſures and Proportions of it; yet nothing is more dangerous in this hour of Temptation. I obſerve *Elijah* was alone when he prayed God in a fit of Diſcontent, to *take away his Life*; and *Jonah*, *ch.* 4. 5, 8. was in a *Booth* alone, out of the City, when he ſaid, *It is better for me to die than to live.* And our bleſſed Lord was alone when *Matth.* 4. 6. the Tempter ſaid unto him, ſet upon the Pinacle of the Temple, *If thou be the Son of God caſt thy ſelf down.* Of Souls under theſe circumſtances, it is eminently true that *Solomon* ſaith, *Ecc.* 4. 11. *Two are better than one*, and *woe*

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to him that is alone when he falleth, for he hath none other to help him up. These Acts are committed usually by Persons that are alone. It is therefore highly advisable to Persons under these Impressions, to avoid giving this advantage to the Adversary, and to those who are nearly concerned in, and about Persons under these Temptations to be watchful, as to this thing, especially when they discern the Impressions are most strong upon them. But having touched upon this before, I shall add no more to it now.

4. *Dir.* Fourthly, There is nothing more proper for Souls under these circumstances, *Than to be much in the Study and Meditation of the Nature of the Covenant of Grace.* I told you before, that supposing a Man or Woman under the conduct and government of Reason, it is very hard to imagine what *Motive* should possibly prevail upon them, to put an end unto their Lives, but the freeing of themselves from so *eminent Evils*, which they suffer to that degree, that they conclude it is *better for them to die than to live.* Now these Evils I told you were either *External, Afflictions and Crosses*, or such as are *Internals, Horrors of Mind, Terrors of Conscience.* If the Motive be a freedom

freedom from Evils of the first sort, I advised before what I judged proper, *viz.* The Consideration, whether the determination of our Lives in that manner, would indeed free us, or rather make our Condition much worse. And Secondly, Whether there be not an easier and safer way to procure our selves such an Immunity. But now, Suppose the Evils be of the second sort, *viz.* *The Horrors and Terrors of Conscience, from the guilt of sin.* If this be the Motive, the force of it lieth in our *Ignorance or Mistake about the Covenant of Grace*, and look as under a *Temptation*, to which External Misery is the great Motive. There is nothing more proper than a just understanding of the state of the Damned, and the misery of Impenitent and Unpardoned Souls in the World to come: So supposing the *Motive* to be *Horrors and Terrors of Conscience*, upon our Reflections upon Sin, there is nothing more proper for a Soul than rightly to understand the *Covenant of Grace*, and the reading of such Books, and whetting upon our Hearts such Portions of Gods revealed Will in his Word, as are most fully expressive of it. Truly, to understand this, *That there is no Sinner run into*

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such an arrear with Gods Justice, no Soul so guilty, but by vertue of a gracious Covenant of Redemption and Grace, which God the Father hath from Eternity contracted with the Son of his Love; the Redeemers part in which Covenant is also fulfilled by Jesus Christ: may find Mercy with God, repenting of his Sin, and casting it self upon the free Mercy and Grace of God, in and through the Merits and Satisfaction of Christ. Such is this Covenant of Grace, that the most guilty Soul fulfilling his part in it, and accepting of it, may be assured, that although its past sins, cannot be made never to have been, yet they shall be *as if they never had been.* That is, they shall no more condemn the Soul, then if they never had been; they shall not be mentioned, they shall be sought for and not found; the *Righteousness of Christ* shall be reckoned unto the Soul, as if it were its Righteousness. It is impossible that a Soul knowing and believing this, and living in the view of this gracious Covenant, should ever be frighted out of its Life, from the *Horrors of Conscience by its Reflections* upon its guilt of Sin. Though an *ignorant Person*, that knoweth not this, or an *unbelieving Soul*; which

which though it may have received the Notion of it, yet cannot believe it may from this Motive be induced to a yielding to this Temptation; yet to ſpeak the truth, admiting a Soul ſure of its Damnation, and that its Sins were ſo great as they could never be forgiven; it ſhould in reaſon rather be an Argument to a Soul, if it were poſſible, by all means imaginable to lengthen out its days to the years of *Methuſelah*, then to cut off an inch of that time which God will allow him. For what reaſon can prompt any Man to think the Horrors and Torments of a wounded Conſcience more intollerable than the Pains that are ſuffered by damned Souls? Or what Reaſon will guid any Man to endeavour to be tormented before his time? How earneſt do we find condemned Malefactors, ſometimes (tho out of all hope to be pardoned) but to be reprieved for a time; but I ſay, by reaſon of the *Covenant of Grace*, this is not the caſe of any one poor Soul, to advantage this Temptation. There is no Soul that can in judgement ſay (though ſometimes they ſay ſo in their Fits and Paſſions) *I know I ſhall be damned*, and there is nothing can give a riſe for Satan in this Temptation, but

Persons Ignorance, or Unbelief of the *Covenant of Grace.* O therefore, let all Souls, but especially such as are thus tempted, study this: Consider,

1. What it is that God hath *Covenanted for*, *for pardon of Sin: For power and strength against Sin*, *for Eternal Life and Salvation*, *for strength against Temptations.* Every Spiritual Promise is a branch of the Covenant, and the Promises are of those various Natures, that there is no Spiritual Evil of which we can have any present sense, or any fear as to time to come, for which God hath not in one Promise or an other provided us an Antidote. Is it the guilt of Sin already committed? God hath promised to *pardon* it. Is it the fear of guilt not yet contracted, God hath said, I will *heal your Backslidings and love you freely*. He hath said, *Sin shall not have Dominion over your Mortal Bodies.* So as thou hast no reason to destroy thy self, either because thou hast sinned, or because thou fearest thou shalt sin against God to an irremissible degree. Art thou afraid that *Temptations* shall prevail against thee? He hath assured thee, that *Christ was therefore tempted, that he might be able to succour the tempted*; that *with the temptation*

tion he will give thee an happy iſſue, that he will *bruiſe Sathan under thy Feet ſhortly*. In ſhort, There is no Spiritual Incumbrance, as to which there is not ſome proviſion made in the Covenant of Grace, and declared in ſome Goſpel Promiſe.

2. Conſider again, the *freeneſs of the Covenant*. It is called a *Covenant of Grace*, *Grace* ſignifieth *Free Love*. *I will* (ſaith God) *heal your Backslidings*, *and love you freely*. There is nothing to be paid for thy Pardon, all that is, is finiſhed, the utmoſt Farthing that the Juſtice of God could exact, is already paid by the Hand of Chriſt. There is *nothing required of thee but an acknowledgement of thy Guilt*, *an hatred of thy former Ways*, *a reſolution joyned with an endeavour to forſake them*, *with an acceptance of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, *as thy Redeemer and Saviour*. Oh this, this is that, which could a Soul, under Temptations of this Nature believe, theſe Temptations would certainly abate. We in diſtreſſes of Conſcience ſtick too much *in a Righteouſneſs of our own*. Let me here give you the Copy of a ſhort Letter wrote by that Eminent Servant of God *Luther*, to an *Hermite*, *v. Luther. Ep. t. 1.* "I (ſaith he) deſire to know what thy

" Soul doth, whether at last being weary " of its own Righteousness, it hath learned " to breath after, and to trust in the " Righteousness of Christ. For in our Age " a Temptation of Presumption too much " prevaileth, and particularly in them, " who by all means study to approve " themselves Righteous and good Men, " being ignorant of the Righteousness of " God, plentifully and freely given unto " us, by and through Christ. They so " long study to work well, until they " arrive at a confidence of standing be- " fore God, as it were, upon their own " Legs, and by their own Merits, which " is a thing impossible. You and I have " both been once of that Opinion, or " rather in that Error, but now I set my " self against it, but have not yet con- " quered my self as to it. Therefore (my " dear Brother) learn Christ, and him " crucified; learn to sing Praise to him, " and despairing of your self, to say to him, " *Lord Jesus thou art my Righteousness,* " *I am thy Sin: Thou hast taken upon thee* " *what was mine, and given unto me* " *what was thine. Thou hast taken what* " *thou wert not, and given unto me what* " *I was not.* Take heed (saith he) of " aiming at such a degree of purity, as

" to

"to appear to thy self no Sinner, for "Christ dwelleth in the Hearts of none "but Sinners. He therefore came down "from Heaven when he dwelled in his "Saints, that he might dwell in Sinners. "O meditate of his Love, and you will "feel his most sweet Consolation. For "to what purpose hath he died, if we "could arrive at a tranquility of Con-"science by our own Endeavours, and "Tormenting of our selves? You will "never therefore find Peace, but by de-"spairing of your Selves, and your own "Works, and a fiducial dependance on "him. You will further learn by this, "That as he took thy Nature, and made "thy Sins (as it were) his, so he hath "made his Righteousness thine. An hour of Temptation, either of this *Nature*, or to despair of *Gods Mercy*, as to the pardon of Sin, and the *Eternal Salvation* of the Soul, will discover the value of those Physicians, who have found out another way to relieve *afflicted Consciences*, in the sense of their own Unrighteousness, then by pressing the great Doctrine of the Gospel of the *Justification of the Soul*, by the *Righteousness of Christ*, *reckoned to the believing Soul for Righteousness*. And certainly, Gods Absolution or Acquittance of

a Soul from its Debts to *Divine Justice*, by the Righteousness of the Son of God, *reckoned*, *accounted*, or (which is the same) imputed to it, as if performed by it, is of no more difficult Conception (whatever some pretend in the case) than a Creditors Discharge, and giving Acquittance to a Debtor upon his Friend or Sureties payment of the Debt; upon which the Principal is Discharged, as if he had personally paid it. Believe it, other Notions may afford matter of Discourse in a calm time, but nothing but the Notion of *Free Grace* and *Christs Righteousness* reckoned to us, will serve us in an hour of *Temptation*. Let us therefore rather chuse to part with the *Sun in the Firmament*, or with the *Light of our Eyes*, than to part with this great Truth. Let some trust in *Charriots*, some in *Horses*. Let some trust in the *Works of others*, some in their own *Fancies*; but let us remember the Name of the Lord of God, and let us remember that his Name is the *Lord our Righteousness*. When a Soul is under great Horror and Terrors of Conscience, because of its Guiltiness, its *former guilt of Sin*, let the Sin be what, and of what Nature it will. Oh let it remember that Christ was given

for

for a *Covenant for the People*; he was by his Father *called in Righteousness*, and his *Hand was held*, and he was *kept* and given for *a Covenant of the People*, for *a Light of the Gentles*, *to open the blind Eyes*, *to to bring the Prisoners from the Prison*, and them that sit *in Darkness*, *out of the Prison House*; *Isaiah* 42. 6, 7. Let him remember that he is to say, *Isaiah* 45. 24. *Surely in the Lord I have Righteousness and Strength.* That if he had never committed those Sins, which now so lie upon and load his Conscience, yet he could never have stood before God in his own Works, and in a legal Righteousness; but *what the Law could not do because it was weak through our Flesh, that God himself hath done, sending his Son in the likeness of sinful Flesh, and for Sin condemning Sin in the Flesh, that the Righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us*; *Rom.* 8. 3. And let him consider, that being he must be saved by Christ, and stand before God, as *found in him*, *not having his own Righteousness*, though his Nakedness hath been more than the Nakedness of some other Men, yet that *long white Robe* is large enough to cover it; for the *Righteousness of Christ*, his Merits, are of vast and infinite Vertue; as the *Schoolmen* say

of Gods Essence, that it filleth Heaven and Earth, and an *infinite space beyond both.* So the Merits of Christ have expiated for the Sins of all that shall be saved, and have an infinite Vertue beyond. Therefore there is no reason for a Soul to conclude its *Sins shall not be forgiven, or its Horrors of Conscience for them never cease:* those cease of course upon the *sense of pardon*, or a *good hope through Grace.* It is but a *Relique of Popery* that tortureth Mens Consciences past cure, I mean an Opinion lurking in us, *that we must our selves satisfie the Justice of God*; and that upon the price paid, and satisfaction given by Christ, pardon doth not *proceed freely*; for *all Sin*, and *all Blasphemy*, to a Soul seeking for it, by earnest Prayer, true Sorrow for Sin, and resolution against it, and a true adherence to the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. Again, Study the *Sureness of the Covenant.* It is a Covenant of *Salt*, as well as a Covenant of *Peace.* Gods Covenant with *Day and Night*, shall sooner cease; it containeth the *sure Mercies of David.* It cannot fail, God cannot suffer *his Faithfulness to fail, he cannot alter the thing that hath gone out of his Lips.* The failure of Covenants amongst Men,

is rooted in their *Variableneſs* and *Mutability*, their want of *Fore-ſight* and *Knowledge of future Contingencies*, &c. no ſuch thing can be as to this Covenant. He is the Lord that changeth not, his Name is, *I am*, he had a perfect and certain *Proſpect* and *Fore-ſight* of all that could happen.

4. Finally, Meditate of it as a *well ordered Covenant*. It is true, The *Covenant of Grace* hath its Conditions to be fulfilled on our part. Such as are *the taking hold of it*, mentioned *Iſ.* 56.6. which cannot be without *ſeeking the Lord while he may be found*, *calling upon him while he is near*; *the wicked Man forſaking his way*, *and the unrighteous man his thoughts*, *and his returning to the Lord*; *Iſaiah* 55.6, 7. and *perſeverance in the* ways of God, is *another condition* to be performed. But as to thoſe, it is in this *well ordered*. That there are *Branches* in the ſame Covenant, wherein God hath promiſed: 1. To *work thoſe Conditions in us*; that is, we doing what in us lies by Vertue of that Common Grace, which he denieth to none, or by Vertue of thoſe *ſpecial Habits*, which he will pleaſe to work in us, not to be wanting in thoſe further Aids and Aſſiſtances of his Grace, by

by which we ſhall be inabled to do whatſoever he hath required of us: in order to the obtaining the promiſed end of our Hopes in the Salvation of our Souls. 2. That *that thoſe Failings which we ſhall be guilty of through Humane Infirmity, though they may cauſe us ſorrow in the Fleſh, yet they ſhall not fruſtrate the Promiſe and Covenant of God*, he will yet *heal our Backſlidings and love us freely*. Now the Covenant of Grace being thus rightly underſtood and apprehended, I would fain underſtand what room can poſſibly be left in a Sinner for Satan to faſten this fiery Dart, with any effect upon the Soul. I will ſuppoſe a Soul under the greateſt Terror imaginable, for Sins of the *higheſt* nature. Why ſhould he deſtroy himſelf, if there be hope in the God of Heaven, concerning ſuch Sinners? If all *Sin and Blaſphemy*, whereby a Man ſhall *Blaſpheme*, may be forgiven him? Is God a Righteous God that *loveth Righteouſneſs*, and *can by no means clear the guilty?* Why yet ſhould he do it, if he hath provided the Soul a *Righteouſneſs*, whereby it may ſtand Righteous before God, acquitted form all manner of Guilt, and out of all danger of Condemnation? What if it hath formerly been without

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Righteouſneſs, and be yet without *Strength or Ability* to any Act of *Righteouſneſs*; if the Righteouſneſs wherein it muſt ſtand before God, be not any *perſonal Righteouſneſs of its own*, but the *Righteouſneſs of Chriſt reckoned to it for Righteouſneſs?* Is it tormented *through fear of future Sinnings, the prevailings of Temptations, or its own Corruptions?* Yet why ſhould the poor Creature run himſelf out of the World upon this fright, when the Covenant of Grace is ſo *well ordered*, as there is in it a ſufficient Proviſion made for it, both for Aſſiſtance againſt the prevailings and dominion of Sin, to that degree, as to ruin the Soul to Eternity, and as to that degree of Guilt, which every Soul through Ignorance, *Infirmity, pure or mixt*, runs into, for the *healings of its Backſliding*. What is here left for a ſinful Soul to do, but to uſe the means of Grace, to apply it ſelf unto God by *Faſting* and *Prayer*, to conſider its ways, and what in it lies to turn to the Lord, to be ſenſible of its Sins, and to truſt in the Lords Mercies, taking heed to it ſelf that it ſin no more preſumptuouſly; abſtaining from all appearances of Evil, ſtudying to perfect Holineſs in the fear of God; and daily to renew

new its Repentance and Faith in Christ, as it discerneth its Sins are renewing every day. To what purpose doth a Soul under such gracious and hopeful Circumstances think of destroying it self, and asserting its own Eternal Condemnation, or at least making its Salvation very uncertain, which it should rather design to make sure, by an Holy Life and Conversation. So that, I say, admit *Horror of Conscience* for *Sin* to be the Argument Satan makes use of to inforce this Temptation, nothing can be more proper for a Soul exercised under the Temptation, than to study, understand, lay hold on, make application of, and improve the Covenant of Grace; and often to repeat to it self that of St. *Paul*, *Rom.* 8. 34, 35. *Who is he that condemneth?* Or what sin is that which can condemn me? *It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again*, who is even *at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us, who shall separate us from the Love of Christ?* But this is enough to have spoken upon this Argument.

CHAP.

CHAP. XII.

Further Directions. Not keeping the Devils Counsel, not deliberating or parlying with Satan. Giving their Thoughts what lawful Diversions they can. Whether they should shun Precipices, coming near Wells, or Ponds, and keeping close to all Means of Grace, whether more Publick or Private.

5. FIthly, Let Christians under the *Impetus* of these Suggestions take heed *of keeping the Devils Counsel*, or *admitting* any *Parley* or *Deliberation with him about this point of hearkening to the Motion.* May it be the lot of any of our Souls at any time to come under such Impressions? Oh let us never *conceal them from our Faithful Ministers*, nor from our *Christian Friends*, nor from our *neareſt Relations*: Not from the first and second, because they are the *Ordinance* of God unto us, to give us Spiritual Counsel and

and Assistance; to shew us the unreasonableness of the Motion, the danger of the Temptation; it is their work to *Pray* with us and to *Pray* for us: It is the work of the Minister to Interpret and Declare to us the Mind and Will of God. A Brother, a Spiritual Friend, is born for an hour of Adversity: The *Temptation*, while discovered, will press us harder, and we shall the less know what to say to the Tempter, and how to Resist our great Adversary; nor should we conceal our selves from our neareſt *Relations*; for though they should not be so able as an Intelligent, Godly Divine, or Knowing Christians; to fortify us with Reasons, and Arguments, yet they will be concerned to *Watch* us, especially when they discern the *Impressions* more violent, for sometimes Impressions of this nature are so violent and strong, that they hurry poor Creatures to a present destroying of themselves, and the Wicked Action is done in a Moment. And again, Christian, If thou wouldest be able to stand against this Fiery Dart; never admitt *a Parly or Deliberation with the Tempter about it*, That Soul is in a great degree Conquered, that is prevailed with to deliberate upon an Action so apparently contrary to the

the Revealed Will of God. *Get thee behind me Satan*, was Christs Answer to the Tempter; *Luke* 4. 8. *When he Tempted* him to *Worship him*: He would not so much as once think upon the Motion.

6. Sixthly, Let *Christians* under these *Assaults give their Thoughts as much lawful Diversion as they can.* I say lawful, for we must take heed of casting out one Devil by another; but there is lawful Diversions enough, such are visitings of good People, diligent Attendance upon our honest Labours in our Callings, giving our selves any honest Imployment, by our Exercise in which, our Thoughts may be taken off from fixing upon the Impressions made upon them. I have often seen it, that Persons under these Circumstances have been very hardly perswaded to this; but it is Men and Womens duty in these Cases in a thing which (as this is) is within their power, and onely contrary to their humour to force themselves, and if in this they be wanting it is a Presumptuous Sinning.

7. Seventhly, I know not what I should say to that piece of Advice which some give Souls under these Assaults. *Not to shun* the *sight*, or *handling*, or coming near

near any *Instruments*, *or Means which they may make use of to destroy themselves*, as *Knives*, *Ropes*, *Wells*, *Precipices*; &c. It is true, it is good for us to go on in our ordinary way trusting in God, and not *fearing* the Tempter; but in an hour when the *Impression* is *very strong upon the Tempted Soul*: Whether it be advisable or no I cannot tell, for Christians thus Tempted, to come too nigh Precipices or Places of deep Waters, or such Instruments as they may make a sudden use of, to do himself or herself Evil; at least not without a close and narrow Watch upon them: for the truth is, in the heat and violence of such Impressions, Men and Women oft times have little use of *their Reason*. As to this thing therefore I think Christians ought to Rule themselves by the Circumstances of the present hour, and this cannot be fixt for a general Direction: I will add but one thing more, and with that shut up this Discourse.

8. Let *such Christians above all others*, *keep close to the use of all Means of Grace*, whether more *Publick* or more *Private*. The Means of Grace are *the Word*, the *Sacraments*, and *Prayer*. The Word is to be *Read* and *Heard*. We Read the

pure

pure Word of God without any thing of Mans Invention: This hath been mightily Powerful. The Story of *Auguſtine* I have told you of, who under great Diſtreſs, and Terrour of Conſcience, was Relieved by Obeying a Voice he thought he heard out of the adjoyning Room, *Tolle & Lege*, Take up the Book and Read; upon which he took up a Bible by him, and Read what God Bleſſed to his Relief. The *Word Preached* hath ſomething of Mans Mixture, but if faithfully opened and applied, is *Gods Ordinance* for the Staying and Comforting of People. The Miniſter is Gods *Interpreter*, and he ſhould be one of a Thouſand. I look upon it as the great Miſery of Souls under theſe Temptations, they can ſeldom be perſwaded to Read, or to *hear the Word*; and verily where it is thus, the Devil hath prevailed a great way. I would that ſuch Chriſtians would ſeriouſly think what they do in neglecting Means of Grace in their power to uſe, if they expect any help from God. Nor would I have ſuch a Chriſtian neglect a *Sacrament*, if he be one that hath formerly declared his Right: Theſe Temptations while yeilded to, are our Miſery not our Sin; who knows whether God

may not Bless the *Sign and Seal* of a *Dying Crucified Christ*, for them to let them know there is no Reason they should Kill or Crucifie themselves. But above all, let them not omit *Constant Fervent Prayer*, and that both Ordinarily and more *Solemnly*. Great is the force of Prayer, it calls in the help of the Almighty; both *for a Deliverance* from the Tempter in his own time, and *for his Assistance* and upholding the Soul while it pleaseth him to keep the Soul, in this Spiritual Combate.

FINIS.

Concerning

TEMPTATIONS TO Deſpair.

CHAP. I.

The Text *Gen.* 4. 13. conſidered. *The Nature of Deſpair. The Efficient Cauſes in Temptations to Deſpair. Our own Luſts*, the *Devil.* The *Devil and our own Luſts working jointly*, &c.

OUr Tranſlation Readeth the Text, *Gen.* 4. 13. *My Puniſhment is greater then I can bear.* In your larger Bibles you will find in the *Margent*

it is Read, *Mine Iniquity is greater then that it may be forgiven.* This *Parens* thinks the most proper Reading, That which favoureth our Translation, is what followeth in the next Words: *Behold thou hast driven me this day from the Face of the Earth*, &c. where he complaineth onely of his *Punishment*. Either Reading is what the Original will bear, either of them makes the words the Complaint of *Cain* after he had kill'd his *Brother Abel*, and God had come down and doomed him for it; telling him, *He was Curs'd from the Earth, which had opened her Mouth to receive his Brothers Blood. When he tilled the ground, it should not yield unto him her strength: A Fugitive, and a Vagabond shalt thou be in the Earth.* To which *Cain* replyeth either thus: *My Punishment is greater then I can bear.* Or, *Mine Iniquity is greater then that it can be forgiven.* Whether he complaineth of his *Sin* or of his *Punishment*? That's the onely Question, nor needs it any Decision. Both *Readings* express the *Genius* of a *Reprobate*, who either complaineth of his *Punishment*, but not of his *Sin*, or if at any time, he complains of Sin, it is *despairing*, and *without hope of Mercy*: Onely

I cannot

I cannot agree with *Chrysostome* and others, who Interpret these Words into a *full Confession of Sin*, onely they say it was too late (but true Repentance is never too late) I shall in my Discourse consider the Words as you have them in the Margents of your Bibles, designing onely to make use of them to discourse as to the great *Temptation to Despair*. In my Discourse upon which I shall first Consider,

1. *The Nature of the Temptation in it self.* 2. *The Tempters inforcing it.* 3. *The means ordinarily made use of, in the inforcing of it.* 4. *The most probable means to be used for getting a victory over it.* As to the first,

I have already told you, That every Evil *Temptation is a Motion or Solicitation of the Soul to Sin*, which when it is more Importune and Impetuous, we usually call a *Temptation*; but let us more particularly inquire into the Nature of this Sin of *Desperation*. Despair in the general Notion of it, signifieth a *casting away of all hope, as to the obtaining of some good which we desire*; and so the Object of it may be any good thing of which we are not possest, but may be the Object of our Desires or

Hope. Thus we may *Deſpair* of Life, as St. *Paul* did, 2. *Cor.* 1. 8. of Health, of Succeſs in Buſineſs, *&c.* but in the Notion I am now ſpeaking to, it muſt be limited to the greateſt *Spiritual Good*, ſuch as *Pardon of Sin*, *Living with God in Glory another day*; *&c.* And here again we muſt diſtinguiſh betwixt *Fear* and *Deſpair*, for although there be no *Deſpair* without *high degrees of Fear*, yet there may be *Fears*, great degrees of Fear (which may produce ſome Phraſes of Deſpair, or Fits, or Paſſions of it, where yet there is no fixed Deſpair: *Deſpair* (in the Notion of it to which I am now ſpeaking) *Is a Souls total, fixed, permanent, Want and Rejection of all Hope, as to the Pardon of Sins in this Life, or any happy Eſtate in the Life to come.* When (as the Apoſtle ſpeaks) there remaineth nothing in the Soul, *but a certain dreadful looking for, of Judgment, and fiery Indignation to devour them as the Adverſaries of God*, *Heb.* 10. 27. It is an Hell began in the Soul in this Life: It is often attended with *Deſperate Impreſſions*, *Blaſphemy* againſt God, always with intollerable *Horrour* and *Terrour of Conſcience*: But we are not at preſent ſo much Conſidering it, in the *Effects* and

Iſſue

Issue of it, as in the *Nature* and *first Rise* and *Beginning of it.* The next thing we have to consider is, the *Efficient Causes* in this great *Temptation.*

I have shewed you that every *Temptation to Sin*, is from *our own Lust*, the *Devil*, or the *World.* The Men of the World have rarely any considerable Efficiency in this Temptation; it is not often we hear them telling us, That we have sinned *beyond hope of Mercy.* They rather err on the other hand. The two ordinary Efficient Causes in this Temptation, are *our own Lust*, and *our grand Adversary the Devil.*

1. Our own *Lust*, Our *depraved hearts* are enough under some circumstances, which we may be under, to suggest to us very unworthy thoughts of God, and highly derogatory to his Honour and Glory. For though in a *quiet calm state*, our Lust suggests ordinarily other things to us, yet all the Lust that is in our Hearts doth not discover it self at the same hour: We shall find Lusts stirring in us in an hour of Prosperity, of which we shall hear nothing in an hour of great Tribulation and Adversity: And so on the other side, we shall find those Lusts stirring in us in a time of great Affliction

and Adverſity, which we diſcerned little of in the halcyon days of our Proſperity. When Men come to be under great preſſures of Afflictions, then thoſe who in Health could think of nothing but their *Senſual Satisfactions* or Worldly Buſineſs, begin to be at leiſure to think of Dying, and of the Eternal State of Souls; and tho ordinarily our Luſt enclineth us rather to preſume, and groundleſly to prophecy Good rather than Evil to our ſelves; yet I do not know but under ſome circumſtances, our Hearts, that of themſelves are no better diſpoſed to give God the Glory of his Mercy, then of his Juſtice may (though the Devil ſtand by) ſuggeſt to us black and hard thoughts of God, which may produce *Deſperation*.

2. But where the Impreſſions are *fixed* ſtrong, and *abiding*, and the Soul (though out-reaſoned) refuſeth to be comforted, or to entertain any better thoughts of God, but rather is more ſtubborn and pertinacious; and blaſphemeth God, I ſhould ſuſpect a great prædominance of a *Præternatural Cauſe*, and the Soul under the Violence of Satan; for we are naturally inclined to hope well for our ſelves, and to lay hold of every good word that looketh that way. 3. Poſſibly

3. Possibly, *The Devil may also in this Temptation joyn with our own Lusts*, and the Temptation may be mixt; from one or both these Causes are these Temptations, and this sinful Habit is begun and perfected in our Souls.

CHAP. II.

What seeming Good is the bait in this Temptation. To speak the truth of it self. Possibly the serving our Malice upon God. An Examination. Whether the Doctrines of Election of Persons, particularly Redemption and Special Grace, conduce to Despair? The contrary evinced.

THe greatest difficulty is to resolve with what Bait it is possible such an Hook as this is, should be baited; for whereas the Apostle telleth us (as I have formerly opened to you) That every one is tempted when he is *drawn away by his own*

own Luſt and inticed, it might juſtly poſe an ordinary Reaſon to imagine, what *ſeeming Good ſhould entice a Soul to caſt away all hopes of Happineſs from the Mercy of God*, all hopes of Eternal Life and Salvation. To conclude it *ſhall go to Hell*, and there is no hope for it to the contrary. Can there be ſo much as the leaſt umbrage and appearance of Good, that ſhould have preference to theſe hopes in a Soul, under the leaſt conduct of Reaſon? It it true, for a *Senſual Deſpair* there may, for that is rooted in *Atheiſme* and *Unbelief* of any ſuch thing, as the need of a *Pardon* for its Sins, or a *future happy State*, the obtaining of which the Senſual Man ſeeing limited to the hard Condition (as he thinks) of denying himſelf in all his Senſual Pleaſures, he may jocularly conclude, *There is no hope for him* (believing no reality in the pretended Objects for his hope) that he may the more ſecurely cry out with the *Epicures*, *Let us eat and drink, for to morrow we ſhall die*; or like them, *Jer.* 2. 25. When God ſaid to them, *With-hold thy Foot from being unſhod, and thy Throat from thirſt*; ſaid, *There is no hope*, no, *for I have loved Strangers, and after them I will go.* But now for a *Sorrowful Deſpair*, for

for a Soul having this Grace and Hell in Prospect, it may look for a great Riddle. What *appearing Good* should be a Motive to him to *conclude* there is *no Mercy in God for him*, no possibility of Eternal Salvation.

1. What if we should say, That the appearing Good, that enticeth him to these thoughts, is, *To speak the truth of himself, and not to flatter himself with idle and vain hopes*, as he now thinks he hath done too long. You know we are naturally desirous to know our own Fate or Fortunes, as we call them: What shall become of us or betide us in the latter end? And though we are willing enough sometimes to flatter our selves, yet there is a time when we desire the contrary.

2. Secondly, Is not the *appearing Good in some a rooted Malice and Hatred against God, and the Satisfaction of that by derogating from his Goodness and Mercy?* This is indeed of all the most dreadful Account that can be given: That Soul is in the Suburbs of Hell it self, to whom it is a satisfaction, when it can do no more, to Blaspheme and speak Evil of God. I had rather assign the former, as the most ordinary *appearance of Good*, seducing the Soul

Soul into this Guilt. It now pleaſeth the Soul that thinks it hath deceived the World ſo long, by walking in a vain ſhew, to know and ſpeak the truth of it ſelf, as it thinketh in its Heart, through the Seduction of Sathan; but ſtill it muſt be enquired what the Devil can poſſibly ſuggeſt to a Soul to debauch it into ſuch a miſapprehenſion of God, and ſad Opinion of it ſelf.

Now there being nothing in Nature that can alienate God from the Soul, but Sin, the guilt of the Soul and its ſtate before God, by reaſon of Sin, muſt needs be that and that onely, which the Devil can mount this great Gun upon; and this is that which *Cain* ſaith, *Mine Iniquity is greater then it can be forgiven.* But before I come to ſpeak of that, let me a little take notice of ſome other Propoſitions, which many grave Divines take to be moſt certain truths, and others think ſerve the Devil in great ſtead, in order to his inforcing this great Temptation. Let me digreſs a little, to judge whether indeed the guilt of thoſe Propoſitions be according to the cry by which they are accuſed. They are thoſe concerning the *Doctrine of Predeſtination, Redemption,* and *the neceſſity of Special Grace,*

in

in order to Salvation. I intend not to argue the truth of the *Propositions* on either side (that were too large a Work) but onely to consider whether the Devil can use, what by some eminent Divines (as to them) is asserted, as advantages for this fiery Dart. I remember *Scultetus* in his *Annals*, tells us a Story of an honest studious Young Man in *Cambridge* (whom 'tis believed the Papists made away) *That he was found hang'd in his Study, with his Finger laid upon a Bible, opened before him, upon a Text usually brought to confirm Predestination.* But the Fiction obtained not that credit for which it was devised, to induce the World to believe, that his imbracing the Doctrine of *Predestination* put him upon that desperate Practice. But to the Matter.

1. It is true many great and eminent Divines have thought, *That God hath passed an Eternal Decree concerning the future state of all Men and Women, causing some to Eternal Life, passing by others.* Suppose we should put it to the highest pitch, *Determining others to Eternal Death.* I intend not, as I said before, to dispute what is truth in this; certain it is, God *from all Eternity fore-knew* the *Eternal Issues* of all, if some can conceive *how God*

should

ſhould fore-know this without willing it, or be willing not to determine how he fore-knew it, and *what that was or could be but the Will of God*, *which ſhould make a Futurity certain.* And others cannot conceive any firſt cauſe but God, nor any way of Divine Fore-knowledge, but from his Will and Purpoſe. It is not my Buſineſs to intermingle my ſelf in their Quarrel, but ſuppoſe the one Opinion or the other, I would gladly underſtand what advantage the Devil can take from the one or the other, as to this Temptation. Some Divines indeed do ſay, That *God ordained ſome to Eternal Life, out of his own good pleaſure, in and through Chriſt, without any conſideration of their Faith and good Works fore-ſeen, as moving him ſo to predeſtinate them*; but with all he predeſtinated them to obtain this Eternal Salvation, *in the Exerciſes of Faith and Holineſs, without which they were never to ſee the Lord.* But do any Divines ſay, That *God ordained any to Eternal Death*, or *paſſed over any* in his Eternal Counſel, *who ſhould be damned*, otherwiſe then upon the *juſt demerits of their preceding ſins?* Yes, it may be (will ſome ignorant Perſons ſay) they that hold an *abſolute* Decree, hold *Election of Perſons*,

sons, and *Reprobation of Persons*. They do indeed hold an *Election of Persons*, in the sense I before opened, that the *foreseen Faith and Holiness of none moved God to ordain them* to Life. They do also believe that God hath a *Jus Absolutum*, a Soveraign Power over his Creatures, as the *Potter over the Clay*. But they say that God doth not in the Condemnation of any Sinner use this, but onely useth a *Jus Ordinatum*, and proceedeth according to his Law. *The Soul that sinneth shall Die*: Which now being supposed, I would gladly know what Argument Satan draws from hence to perswade any to Despair? He can Suggest to the Soul, *That it is a Reprobate*; and cannot the Soul Answer, That it is more then the Devil knows: That there is no Soul but that which *sinneth shall Die*; so that notwithstanding all said upon this Argument. *The Guilt of Sin is all that remaineth to the* Devil to object, to drive unto Despair.

It is true, that concerning the Extent of the *Death of Christ*, as *to Persons*, there are various Opinions, some think he *equally died for all* (a sad Doctrine which gives *Judas* as much comfort as *Peter*.) Others think he purchased a certainty of *Salvation*

Salvation for the Elect, but a possibility for all. Others believe he died onely for the Elect. But admitting the last to be true, which some think, to make Redemption conform to the Decree of *Election*, and not understand how Christ should purchase an *impossible possibility*, which must be as to some, if there were any that were passed over in the Eternal Purpose, or any to whom God resolved not to give those effectual Aids of his special Grace, necessary in order to those Exercises of Faith and Holiness, by which Salvation must be obtained. But what Market can the Devil make of this? He can tell them they are not *Elected, and so Christ died not for them.* But the Soul can reply, *He was a Lier from the Beginning*, and none of Gods Privy Counsellors; and that its Non-election can onely appear from its prodigious sinnings, continued in to the end without Repentance and Faith in Christ. And the others telling them, *Christ died for all*, will not relieve them, for *Judas* notwithstanding that, *proved a Son of Perdition*, and went *to his own place*, when he had hang'd himself.

It is also true, that many great Divines do think, none can be saved without the special

ſpecial Grace of God, working together with the Word in their Hearts, and effectually renewing, turning, changing, and ſanctifying; and that this is not in a Mans own Power but the work of God. What advantage now can the Devil make of this Doctrine, to perſwade the Soul to caſt away all hopes of the Mercy of God through Chriſt, for the pardon of its Sins, and for the obtaining of Eternal Life and Salvation? He can ſuggeſt to the Soul, *That God never beſtowed upon it this effectual Grace, nor ever will.* If he doth not add the later, he ſaith nothing; for what Ground have I to caſt away *all hope* if yet there be hope, that although I have not yet repented and believed, yet God will give me his Grace (though at the Eleventh hour) that I ſhall *repent*, *believe*, and be *ſaved*. Now ſuppoſe him to ſuggeſt ſo, How ſhall he evidence this to me, but from *the guilt of my ſin or my abiding in it?* It is therefore, that whatever bluſter ſome *Sciciſts* make in the World, to load the Opinions of ſome great and eminent Divines, with Envy and Obloquy; yet in very deed, the Devil can urge Deſpair of the Pardon of Sin, and obtaining Eternal Life, with any colourable reaſon, upon no Soul

but from Sin; nor indeed do we in our Experience find any thing else stick with Souls in an hour of Temptation. Now here he must either say, *Thy Sins are so many they cannot be forgiven*; or, *Thou hast sinned so long a time that thou canst not be forgiven*; Thy hour is over, *thy time is past*; or, *Thou hast sinned some particular sins, which are of so hainous a nature, or so deep a dy, that God will never forgive them.* What the Soul may answer to all these, we shall, God willing, by and by consider.

CHAP. III.

Means to prevent Despair. Clear and distinct Knowledge. Taking heed of inveterate Sinnings. Prodigious Sinnings. All Sinnings against Light. Such Sins especially, as come neareſt the unpardonable Sin.

YOu have heard the Nature of this Temptation, you have also heard from whence *Temptations* of this nature come, *what seeming good* enticeth the Soul to listen

liſten to them, and alſo *what Arguments* the Tempters have alone to uſe to inforce them. Let me now come to ſhew you what is to be done by Chriſtians in order to the repelling and reſiſting of them. And becauſe, as I told you in my Diſcourſe referring to the former; Prevention is the beſt way, let me firſt adviſe what is proper to all of us, upon whom this hour of Temptation is not come, that we may never fall into this ſnare of the Devil.

1. And here let me firſt commend to you all, *a ſound and diſtinct Knowledge of the Truths of God.* The Devil in an hour of Temptation, hath a great advantage upon an ignorant Perſon, above what he hath upon a knowing Chriſtian. *Solomon* tells us true, *That a Soul ſhould be without Knowledge is not good.* He that hath a ſound and diſtinct Knowledge of the *Nature of God*, the *Doctrine of Faith*, the *Covenant of Grace*, and the *Promiſes of the Word of God*, ſeldom falls into, or lieth long under this *Temptation.* How eaſie a thing it is for the Devil to fright ignorant Souls, with telling them, *They are not Elected*, that *Chriſt did not die for them*, that *their Sins are too many or too great, or have been too long continued*

in to be pardoned; or that they have *not truly repented or believed*, or that they *have sinned the unpardonable Sin*; or an hundred such things. O do not slight Knowledge, no not a notional Knowledge of the things of God. You are not able to prophecy of what use it will be to your Souls in an hour of *Temptation*. A knowing Christian may be tempted, and it may be some time before he can get his Hand upon the Sword of the Spirit (which is the Word of God) to draw it out for his purpose; but if he hath it by his side, if he be mighty in the Scriptures, he will have no long work with an Enemy of this kind. I pity such as cannot read, or if they can, yet have lost their time, and not improved it to learn the Scriptures, be acquainted with *Catechisms*, which should ground them in the *Doctrine of Faith*. Thou that despisest Knowledge, neglectest, yea, despisest thy own Soul, and all its Peace and Comfort, and seemest to presume upon a Miracle, to be shewed for thee in an hour of Temptation.

2. Secondly, *Take heed of going on in a course of Sinning, especially against thy Light and Checks of Conscience. Inveterate Sinning*, and *prodigious Sinnings*, and

Sinnings

Sinnings against Light, and *Checks of Conscience*, and particularly some *Sins*, and such especially as come neareſt to the *Sin unto Death*, give the Devil very *high and great advantages*, as to this Temptation.

1. I say first, *Inveterate Sinning*. When Sin hath grown up with a Man from his youth, he hath lived and walked, and wallowed in it many years, it makes the Devil a great Market. We find it hard to believe that God, who can have from us but the homage of a few days or hours, will forgive us the Sins of so many years. It is rare that old Sinners are brought to Repentance and Converted, you shall most generally observe, that if God changeth a Man or Womans Heart, it is either in their Youth, or middle Age, seldom in *Child-hood*, and seldom in *Old Age*; and if in Old Age, they are ordinarily infested with great Temptations. Take heed of Sin growing Old in thy Soul: *An old habit is hardly put off. How can you that are accustomed to do Evil, do Well?* An old Ulcer is hardly Cured; beware of growing Old in any Sin.

Secondly, *Take heed of any kind of prodigious Sinning*. There are degrees in

Sin, all Sin is not of the same dy or magnitude. There are some Sins that more waste Conscience than others; now observe this, *The greater Violence is done to our Conscience by any Sins, the more Advantage the Devil hath from the guilt of them to raise a Temptation to Despair.* For although it is as easie with God to Pardon the greatest *Sins* as the *smallest*, yet we shall not find it so easie to believe that God will forgive the greatest Sins as the smallest, and so the Devil hath the greater advantage from the Reflection upon them, to run us out of a Hope of the Divine Mercy. Fear all Sin, but above all take heed of notorious Acts of Impiety against God, or Unrighteousness toward Men.

3. Thirdly, Take heed of all *Sinning against Light*; indeed against *any Light*, whether it be that of *Nature* or *Revelation*. Take heed of Sinning against those common Notions of *Piety* and *Righteousness*, which are Planted in all by Nature; against the *Common Illuminations of the Holy Spirit*, by the Preaching of the Word of God; against the *Admonitions* of Parents or Governours, against the reflex Light of your own Conscience. Sins against the *direct* or reflex Light of Conscience,

Conscience, do often Cause a very great *Darkness*, which is felt in the Soul; for though in the heat and madness of our Passions in our Youth, we sometimes run down Conscience, and it keepeth silence a while; yet it often recoileth, and reproveth the Sense, and setteth its Sins in order before it; and shews them to it, to a very great disadvantage, and these are a kind of Sins which the Tempter often hangs much upon, in order to promove Despair, and putting the Soul out of Hope of Mercy.

4. Particularly take heed of *such Sinnings as* border neareſt upon the *Sin unto Death*; you know that Christ hath told us, *That all Sin and Blasphemy, shall be forgiven*, onely the *Sin against the Holy Ghost shall never be forgiven*: And the Apostle hath told us; That there is a *Sin unto Death*, for which he did not direct the Christians to Pray, that it might be *forgiven their Brethren.* Now Divines have much exercised themselves in the finding out what this Unpardonable Sin is, nor is it to this day well determined, nor shall I undertake to determine what it is, or whether it be any single Sin yea or no. We find in experience, that the Tempter often maketh

uſe of this Suggeſtion to drive a Soul to Deſpair, telling it, that it hath ſinned this Sin, and therefore there is no hope for it: The vanity of which appears from the Souls thus tempted, *uſual Ignorance*: What the Sin againſt the *Holy Ghoſt is* (as to which indeed the moſt Judicious Divines have been much at loſs to determine) or what comes neareſt to it, upon the Light we have from Scripture to help us to make a determination of it; but though we cannot punctually determine in the Caſe, and it be much more eaſie to determine *what it is not*, than *what it is*; yet we have Light enough from Scripture, to ſhew us what ſinning comes neareſt to it, and it is ill treading upon the brink of ſuch a Pit. That Text, *Heb.* 6. v. 4, 5, 6. inſtructeth us thus far. That it muſt be the Sin of an *Enlightened Soul*, one upon whom the Light of the Goſpel hath Shined, and who hath taſted ſomething of the Heavenly Gift, and been in ſome Meaſure made Partaker of the Holy Ghoſt, and Taſted the good Word of God, and the Powers of the World to come, and after this *falleth away*. From whence theſe things follow, That Heathens *who never heard of God nor Chriſt*, cannot

not *be Guilty of this Sin*, no nor *titular Christians*, who never made any profession of *Religion* or *Godliness*, nor had any degrees of *Godliness*: They must be such as have been *Enlightened*, *Tasted of the good Word*, the *Heavenly Gift*, and *the Powers of the World to come*, and after this *shall fall away*: Yet it is plain, that all sinning against Gospel Light and Spiritual Illumination, all degrees of falling away from the profession of this Truth, is not this Sin. The Apostle *Heb.* 10. 26. and 29. v. seemeth as to this Sin, to instruct us further; for he is there speaking of some, for whom there remaineth *no more Sacrifice for Sin*, *but a certain fearful looking for of Judgment and fiery Indignation*, *which shall devour the Adversaries*: Now who are these? v. 26. *Such as Sin wilfully*, *after they have received the Knowledge of the Truth*, v. 29. *Such as tread under foot the Son of God*, *and count the Blood of the Covenant*, *wherewith he was Sanctified*, *an unholy* thing, and do despite to the *Spirit of Grace*. And this also agreeth with that Phrase, *Heb.* 6. v. 6. Where the Apostle giving a Reason why they cannot be renewed by Repentance, assigneth this, Seeing *they*

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Crucifie to themſelves the Son of God afreſh, and put him to open ſhame; ſo that it ſhould ſeem that to make up this Sin, to *Apoſtacy* after Illumination, or at leaſt having received ſufficient Means of Illumination and making ſome Profeſſion, there muſt be added, ſome eminent *Affront* done to, or *Abuſe of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, and the *Spirit of Grace*, either by Word or Deed; and therefore our Saviour calleth it *Blaſphemy* againſt the *Holy Ghoſt*: Conſonant to this is what the Goſpel tells us of this Sin, you have the firſt mention of it, *Matth.* 12. 31. If you look into v. 24. you ſhall find, That Chriſt having healed one that was *poſſeſſed with the Devil*, who was both *Blind and Dumb*, and People upon that recognizing him as the true *Meſſias*; ſaying, v. 23. *Is not this the Son of David?* the Phariſes ſaid, *This Fellow doth caſt out Devils, by Beelzebub the Prince of Devils.* Chriſt confuteth them, and vindicateth himſelf by this Argument, eaſily to be diſcerned and made up from v. 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30. *I either caſt out Devils (as you ſay) by the Prince of Devils, or by the Power of God.* I will make it out that I do it not by the Prince of Devils, 1. *For this were*

a Ruin to Satans Kingdom; if one *Devil* could be employed or would be employed in caſting out another, the Devils Kingdome would be quickly at an end, it could not ſtand. 2. Again (ſaith he) not I onely, but *your Children in my name caſt them out* (for there were ſome Exorciſts amongſt the Jews, who were the Children (that is the Diſciples of the Phariſes) who though they followed not Chriſt, yet uſed his Name to caſt out *Devils*; as you ſhall find, *Mar.* 9. 38. where *John* telleth Chriſt, *Maſter, we ſaw one caſting out Devils in thy Name, and he followeth not us, and we forbade him, becauſe he followeth not us*; and as you ſhall read, v. 39. *Chriſt* allowed it, the like you find, *Luk.* 9. 48, 49. So did the Sons of *Sceva*, Acts 19. 12. Now the Jews did not accuſe thoſe of acting by the Devil, but from the Power of God; from hence he concludeth, That he did not caſt out Devils, as they malitiouſly charged him, by the help of the Devil, and that they were themſelves otherwiſe convinced in their own Conſciences; therefore he did it *by the Spirit of God*, and by that they could not but know *that the Kingdom of God was come amongſt them*; and ſo they

they *spake Evil of God*, and the *Spirit of God*, and that out of Malice, contrary to the Conviction of their own Consciences: Now saith he, *Take heed what you do*, this is a kind of Sin which God will never forgive, though all other Sin and Blasphemy shall be forgiven; yet for you knowing that what I do I do as *God*, and by the *Power* and *Spirit of God*, to Persecute me, and to Repraoch me, and that you may the better do it to ascribe that to the *Devil*, which is, the Work of God done by me; this is a Sin which shall never be forgiven: So that according to our Saviours Words, this seemeth to be the Sin, That the *Pharises* knowing well enough that Christ was God, Eternal God, and having sufficient means to convince them of it, and that from his *Casting out of Devils*, and several other Miraculous Operations which it was *in the Power of God* onely to do: Notwithstanding yea against this *Conviction*, Maliciously Persecuted the Lord Jesus Christ, and denied these mighty Operations to be *from the Spirit of God*, but said they were from *Beelzebub* the Master Devil. From hence will appear, though not distinctly, what the *Specifical Sin* against the *Holy Ghost* is,

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yea what Sins border upon it and come neareſt to it.

1. *All Sinning againſt Light and Convictions.*

2. *Apoſtacy from a former Profeſſion* and owning of the Goſpel, and the Holy Ways of God.

3. *A Malicious Purſuing and Perſecuting of ſuch as our Conſciences tells us are Righteous Perſons.*

4. An *Aſcribing to the Devil what we are Convinced of to be the Works of God*, and ſo reproaching the *Operations of the Spirit of God*, whatſoever the *Blaſphemy* againſt the *Holy Ghoſt be.* Theſe things or the moſt of them, muſt be ingredients into it; and truly if Perſons have been enlightened with the Knowledge of the Truths and Ways of God, and have made ſome Profeſſion of them, and have had ſome Savour of them, if they fall away from that Profeſſion, and that to ſuch a degree, as not onely to diſown what themſelves formerly owned, but to hate thoſe Truths and Ways of God, and to Perſecute ſuch as ſtill Profeſs them, and adhere to them, and charge thoſe *Impreſſions* and *Operations* which are from the *Holy Spirit of God*, to be from the *Devil*; ſo Blaſpheming the

Holy

Holy Spirit of God; if there be such an unpardonable Sin to be commited, surely these are under the guilt of it; nor can I see any thing can possibly free them from the dreadful Consequence of it, but a timely *Repentance*; remembring their *first professed Love, and turning* unto God; which whosoever can do, or shall obtain Grace from God to do, undoubtedly hath not sinned beyond Pardon; for *he that confesseth his Sins and forsaketh them, shall have Mercy:* But (as I said before) these Sins comes neareſt this Guilt, and where any Soul hath been, or shall be in this kind, and to this degree guilty; the Devil hath a very fair Advantage againſt him, to move him to Despair, upon a Suggestion that he hath committed that Sin, which according to the Revealed Will of God in Holy Writ, shall never be forgiven; nor will he find any way to get out of this Snare, nor any thing to answer the Tempter, pressing hard upon him with a Temptation of this Nature, until he can say, I have indeed done this, but God hath given me an Heart to Repent of it, to remember from whence I fell, and to do my first Works; and he will find it as hard for him to recover any just hopes

of

of Pardon, and Eternal Life and Salvation, as he will find it to be *renewed by Repentance*; if the latter be found impossible to a Soul under these Circumstances, so will the former also be found. O therefore to prevent Temptations of this nature, take heed of all sinning of any continuance, and going on in a course of Sin, especially of any sinnings against Light and Convictions, or against former Professions; and especially of any Malice and Hatred to the ways of God, which you either have formerly owned and acknowledged, or which your Consciences tell you are the right ways of the Lord.

3. Thirdly, Let me again commend to you *an Acquaintance, a through Acquaintance with the Covenant of Grace, and the Dispensation of Salvation revealed to us in the Gospel.* The Despairing Soul hath ordinarily a *Legal Spirit*, and sticks in the Covenant of *Works*. Remember *that we are not under the Law but under Grace*; in some sense, not onely true Believers, but even the whole World, or at least that part of it, to which the glad Tidings of Salvation, through the Gospel, is published, is not *under the Law but under Grace*, not under a *Legal Dispensation*,

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So as none can be saved without a *personal perfect Obedience to the Law of God*; but under a *gracious Dispensation*, wherein (as the Apostle saith, *Rom.* 1. 17. *The Righteousness of God is revealed from Faith to Faith*, that is, wherein it is revealed; that the Righteousness wherein a Man must stand, Just and Righteous before God, is not his own *Righteousness* made up of his Obedience to the Commandements contained in the Divine Law, but *the perfect Righteousness of Christ, by God reckoned unto every Soul that repenteth and believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ*, who walketh not after the Flesh but after the Spirit, minding and savouring the things of the Spirit; which Righteousness of Christ is reckoned to the Soul as soon as it comes to *own, receive, and lay hold upon Christ in the Gospel, exhibited and tendered* unto it. The Soul well possessed of the Doctrine of Free Grace, and Gospel Justification, though it may see frequent Causes for Heart-sorrow, and Humiliation, as well for its former as for its renewing Sins, yet cannot easily see the umbrage of any ground to Despair, and cast away its hope as to Divine Mercy and Forgiveness, or Eternal Life and Salvation. But I have elsewhere

where enlarged upon this Argument.

4. Fourthly, If you would avoid *Temptations to Despair, take heed of presuming.* You shall observe in the Tempers of those with whom you converse in the World, *That those whose hopes are most quickly up, find them also soonest down:* The reason is, because they are persons that usually have no great depth of judgement, and do not build their hopes upon good and sufficient bottoms. So that as it is with some little Rivolets, whose Channel is but a small continent, and which want depth, every good shower of Rain raiseth them, and causeth them to overflow the Banks; but then, the same degree of Rain not continuing, they are as quickly down: So it is with these Men, a little thing raiseth their hopes, and a little thing again sinketh them. Thus it is in the great business of Hope, as to the Pardon of Sin, and obtaining Eternal Salvation. Some Persons build up Hopes upon very light and unjustifiable Grounds; their Hope is indeed but a *Presumption*, like the Grass that groweth upon the House Tops, which a little Heat of the Sun killeth. But other Souls build up their Hopes upon more sure and wary Foundations, which are not so soon shaked.

We use to say, that we are certain of nothing more than what we have sometimes been uncertain of. We are commanded to *work out our Salvation with fear and trembling*, and to rejoyce with trembling. Those Souls that have gained their Hope by the Conquest of many Doubts and Fears, and Jealousies, do not easily lose it; whereas those who have hatched it up with more ease, seldom keep it in an hour of Temptation.

5. I know not what more to advise besides *Frequent Self-Examination*, *close walking with God*, *and diligent and constant Prayer*. Let me inlarge a little upon these: I say First, *Frequent Self-Examination*. It is the Apostles Precepts, *Examine your selves*, *prove your selves*, *whether you be in the Faith or no*; 2 *Cor.* 13. 5. Whether we live by *Hope* or *Sight*, (I mean Assurance) this is highly necessary for that Soul, that would maintain the one or the other. Two things I would have Christians much Examine themselves upon: 1. *The Grounds and Reasons of their Hope.* 2. *The Abatements and Discouragements of them.*

1. *As to the Grounds of their Hope*, which (if good) must always be bottomed in some Piece of *Divine Revelation*,

tion; for Pardon of Sin, and *Eternal Life*, being both of them the free Gift of God; it is unreasonable to hope for either, but upon the Revelation of the will of him in whose Gift they are. In examining therefore the Truth and Ground of your Hope, trust to nothing but *some portions of the Word of God*, which though it doth not tell you by name whose Sins are pardoned, and whose are not, who shall be saved and who shall perish, it doth tell you, what must be wrought in the Hearts of those whose Sins are Pardoned, and how they must live that shall ever see the Face of God in Heaven; there's no trusting to your Interest in God, as he that made you, nor yet to Christ dying for all Men; no nor yet to any Merits or Works of your own. God hath no where said, that he will save all those whom he hath Created, nor all those who believe Christ died for all Men; no, nor yet all those that do some things, that are as to the Matter of them good, and such, as if Men do not, they cannot see God. I shall not here run into particulars, but in the general I shall tell you, that there is nothing but the Revelation of the Will of God in his Word, and the experimental finding

that God hath wrought those things in your Souls, which he in his Word hath made necessary, in order to obtaining Pardon and Eternal Salvation, that is in this Case to be trusted to. Often therefore examine your selves upon these Points, 1. What God in his Word hath made necessary to the obtaining of Pardon and Salvation. 2. *The Work of God upon your Hearts, Creating and Working, and Maintaining, these Habits and Exercises in your Souls.* Nay, do not onely this, but examine your selves also about the *holding or abating of your Hopes*; the Increase or Decrease, and Discouragements of them in your Souls. A faint decaying, weakening Hope, if not lookt to, will grow more and more faint and weak every day than other, till it putrifieth into Despair. Now the force of this lies here, The decays and abatements of our Hope, are caused either from *some Relapses into Sin*, or from some *eminent with-drawings of the Holy Spirit of God*, which upholdeth and maintaineth it in a Soul. And a daily examination or frequent examination of our selves how it is with us, as to our Spiritual hope, will put the Soul both upon *frequent Acts of Repentance*, as it discerneth that its hope is abated by the pre-

prevailings of its Lusts, and also upon frequent Prayers, begging the revivings and upholdings of it from the Spirit of God.

2. *Live in close Communion with God.* I propounded to you before the avoiding of Sin, all Sin, but some especially, to prevent Temptations to Despair. But this is something more, we are at first begotten to a *lively Hope*, *by the Word upon fervent Prayer*, &c. and this Hope is maintained in the Soul, by the same means by which it is first begotten and bred in the Soul. I told you before that we must find the ground and bottom of our Hope in the Word of God. Now Preaching (where it is done sincerely and faithfully) is nothing else but an *Explication* and *Application of the Word of God*, an Interpretation of the Word to our Souls, and a whetting of it upon our Souls; and therefore in reason a conscientious Attendance upon it, must necessarily be a means to confirm and strengthen our Hopes, and to antidote Despair: Nor certainly can often Communion in the Lords Supper be useless, but contrariwise of very great use; for the Lord in that Ordinance having added a Sign to his Word for the confirmation of

our Faith, it must needs be a proper means to strengthen and increase our Hope. In short, All Communion with God, whether it be more Internal by *Meditation*, and the *secret Exercises of the Power* of our Souls upon God, or more *External*, in such Duties as God hath prescribed us to perform an Homage to him by, must be of great use to our Souls in this case. For the more Freedom and Acquaintance we have with God, the more we be with him; the truer and more just Apprehensions we shall have of him, and the more we shall understand the loving Kindness of God. Now all Despair floweth from unjust and unkind Apprehensions and Impressions of God, and from a too great an estrangement from him. It is true, those that know the Lords Name, will trust in him, and hope in his Mercy.

But above all, be much *in Prayer*, that obtaineth all *Grace*, all *Mercy* from God; the beginnings of it, the growth and encrease of it, *&c.* But I shall add no more upon this Subject, directing you to what I judge most proper to prevent in the Soul Fits, or more settled Habits of Despair; and certainly, it is most advisable to keep Satan at a distance, and more easie to oppose the

the firſt Aſſaults, or avoid giving him advantages to it, than to grapple with it.

CHAP. IV.

What Deſpairing Souls ſhould do. They ought to conſult the Phyſician, if no Bodily Diſtemper gives a riſe to ſuch dark Thoughts. What Buſineſs they have with God: No Argument ſufficient to warrant Deſpair. Sometimes none pleaded. The uſual Arguments pleaded, From our many Sins. The greatneſs of them. Our Inveterateneſs in them. Our Sinning againſt the Holy Ghoſt. None of theſe ſufficient. The greatneſs of the Sin of Deſpair ſhewn, in what it implieth; what it is attended with, and produceth. 4. Other Directions for Souls thus tempted.

THus far I have discourſed you, in order to the prevention of theſe Aſſaults. Poſſibly as to ſome this Counſel may come too late; they may already find in their Souls Thoughts tending to *Deſpair*. The next Queſtion is, *What ſhall theſe do?* Or indeed rather, what ſhall be ſaid to, or done for thoſe, for their Support, Relief, or Deliverance? I know but three things that can be done for ſuch a Soul: 1. The Firſt is, *With the Phyſician* of the *Body*, who is Gods Ordinance; the Means he hath appointed by which he healeth our Bodies. 2. The Second is *with God*, who alone hath a Power paramount to *Satan*, and alone can find a way to our Hearts, and make powerful Impreſſions upon them. 3. The Third is with the Party *Tempted*, to perſwade him or her, of the unreaſonableneſs of the Temptation; the contrary Revelation of the Will of God in Scripture, and the uſe of Means, Natural, Moral, and Religious, for the ſupport of him or her ſelf; and the bringing him or her ſelf out of this horrible Pit. Under theſe three Heads I ſhall bring my whole remaining Diſcourſe upon this Argument. 1. The firſt thing, I ſay, is to be done in this Caſe, relates

relates to the *Physician.* It is a thing that we find very difficult, to perswade Souls under these circumstances to believe; nay, many others too, less knowing Christians, that there is any thing of *Bodily Distemper* in the case: But there is nothing more true, nothing that is more ordinarily experimented. God forbid that we should think that all *Despairing Thoughts* and *Expressions*, are the Effects of a *Natural Cause*, a disordered Body or Head. The contrary is evident, but that in many they are so; I was about to say, that in the most they are so; and that where they are not simply and singly the Effects of those Causes, they are yet highly advantaged and improved by the Concurrence of such Bodily Distempers, is most evident, to those who have any Experience in these things, either from what they have found in themselves, or observed from their converse with, and ministring unto, those that have lien under these great Burthens. And there can be no greater Argument for this, then the frequent Experiences we have of Persons, that in the beginning of these Distempers have had them removed, by the use of Natural Means: Not that *God* is to be neglected, for admitting these Fits of Despair, to be but the products of a *Natural Cause*, by the

the ill influence that some disordered peccant Humours of the Body have upon the Mind; disposing it to *Fears* and *Jealousies*, *Suspicious Diffidence*, and *Distrust*. Yet it is *God that must heal us, by his giving a Blessing upon Means; but the Question is not about the Principal Efficient Cause in the Cure*, which must be God; but concerning the *Means* to be *used*, and in the use of which God is to be sought, and his Assistance expected. Therefore, I say, the first thing to be done in these Cases, is consulting with the *Physician*, about the Health of our Bodies, and that with an Able and Experienced Physician; for it is an exceeding weighty Case, with reference to our Good and well Being. Nor ought any Means to be neglected, which such a one shall direct for bringing our Bodies into a right Order, not yet to be used without solemn *Applications to God*, begging both his Direction of them, and his Blessing upon them. Nor ought this to be delayed, for none knoweth the Effects of such Disorders as these, and how quick a growth such Beginning Distempers oft times have. But this is one of the first things I should advise in such a Cause as this is.

2. Secondly, Such a Soul hath also a great deal of *business to do with God*: The

The Nature of which muſt be determined, *according to what it findeth to have given the firſt riſe and cauſe to theſe Thoughts:* If it findeth that ſome Bodily Diſtempers hath given the firſt riſe and cauſe to theſe dark and ill concluding Thoughts: Our buſineſs with God lies, 1. *In begging Gods Direction of us unto the Uſe, and Bleſſing upon us in the uſe of ſuch Means, as are proper, and he will Bleſs unto the Healing of us, and the Deliverance of us from ſo great a Burthen*; that he who miniſtreth unto us, may not have *a miſcarrying hand.* 2. *That he would pleaſe to command the Means uſed to exert and put forth that Vertue which he hath created in them for the producing that Effect we deſire,* and for the obtaining of which we make uſe of them. 3. That in the mean time he would pleaſe ſo to influence and to ſupport our Souls, that our *Bodily Diſtempers may have no ſuch ill Influence upon our Minds, as to be occaſions to us of diſhonouring God, by entertaining any unworthy Thoughts of the Divine Majeſty, Mercy, and Goodneſs.* If we find that theſe black and dark Thoughts ariſe in us, or in any others, from any other Cauſe, whether our own *Reflexions upon*

on our former Sinful Courses, or some particular guilt of Sin upon us: Our Business is still with God by *Prayer*, for it is he alone, that can Pardon Sin, that can give Eternal Life and Salvation, and that can beget in the Soul a lively Hope, as to such Pardon, and obtaining Eternal Life and Salvation; that can Bless any *Spiritual Means* to be used in order to the obtaining of any of these; but here the matter of Prayer and of our Petitions to God, must be of another Nature. That which the Soul in this Cause hath to do with God, is 1. *To confess its Sin unto God, and to begg of God a broken and contrite Heart, that it may confess and bewail its Sin as it ought to do*: When saith *David, Psal.* 32. v. 3, 4 *I kept silence, my Bones waxed old, through my roaring all the day long; for day and night thine hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of Summer. I acknowledged my Sin unto thee, and mine Iniquity I have not hid; I said I will confess my Transgressions unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the Iniquity of my Sin.* 2. He hath a further Work with God; *viz. To begg of him the Pardon of his Sin, and the begetting in his Soul a lively Hope*

in

in his Mercy and Godness. It is God, 1 *Pet.* 1. 3. *The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*, which according *to his abundant Mercy*, *begetteth the Soul to a lively Hope*, *by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead*, *to an Inheritance incorruptible and undefiled*, *and that fadeth not away*, *reserved in the Heavens for us.* 3. Thirdly to begg of God a *Blessing upon all Means in order to this end*, whether the reading, or the hearing of the Word, or any Spiritual Conference with Ministers, or knowing and experienced Christians, who are able to speak a word in season for the Relief of Souls that are weary and heavy laden with the sense of their Sins.

3. A third Work to be done for the Relief of Souls under this sore Temptation, is with the *Persons themselves that are Tempted*; and that is, to *perswade them*, or for such poor Souls to perswade themselves, of the *unreasonableness of those conclusions which they make against themselves.* Now upon this suffer me to inlarge a little in an endeavour to demonstrate the little force that can be in any Argument, that such a Soul can bring against it self in this Case; and in shew you the exceeding sinfulness of this Sining

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of Despair, in the first place let me desire such a Soul to Consider; 1. *That there is no Argument sufficient to warrant it to cast away all Hope in God, as to the pardon of its Sin, and the obtaining Eternal Life and Salvation through Christ.* The one of these dependeth upon the other. For if there be no Argument sufficient to convince such a Soul, that its Sins shall never be forgiven, there can be no Argument sufficient to convince it, that it shall certainly be *Damned*; or that it is a Reprobate: for *Psal.* 32. 1. *Blessed is he whose Iniquities are forgiven, and whose Sins are covered, and to whom the Lord imputeth not Transgression.* A Pardoned Sinner cannot Perish, that is certain: If therefore no Reason can be brought sufficient to prove that God will never Pardon me; none can be brought sufficient for me to conclude from it, *That God will not Save me.*

1. Sometimes Souls under these Circumstances, will plead *no Argument at all*, onely they have such a fixed *Impression* and *Perswasion* upon their Hearts they *know it*, they are sure of it, *&c.* and this is all you can get from it. But as the Apostle saith in another Case, *Gal* 5. 8. *This perswasion cometh not from him that*

that calleth you. Impreſſions upon our Spirits are no Oracles, nor muſt be taken for *Arguments*: Impreſſions or Perſwaſions are either from the *Holy Spirit of God*, or Perſwaſions hatcht up in our Souls *by their own Powers*; or they are from the *Evil Spirit*: *Impreſſions* indeed *from the Spirit of God* cannot deceive, they are infallible, but ſo are not theſe: Can (think you) this Perſwaſion be from him that every where in his Word calleth upon Men, to Sinners, to all ſorts and degrees of Sinners, to *Repent and Beleeve*, to *waſh themſelves and make themſelves Clean*; telling them that if their *Sins were as Scarlet*, *they ſhall be as Snow*; *if as Crimſon*, *they ſhall be as white as Wooll*; that he *will have Mercy* upon them, and *abundantly Pardon* them? *Iſaiah* 55. 6, 7. Can he that calleth Sinners, all Sinners *that are weary and heavy laden*, to *come unto him*, Promiſing them *Reſt for their Souls*? I ſay can they poſſibly think that he hath *perſwaded them* that they ſhall never obtain Pardon? It muſt therefore remain, that theſe Perſwaſions in whatſoever Souls they are found, muſt either be *bred in the Soul* from its own *Corruption*, or brought into the Soul by *Satan*. Let them

be

be from which of these two Causes they will, they are very far from being certain and infallible. *The Heart of Man is deceitful above all things*, and the Devil was *a Liar from the Beginning*. Time was, it is possible, when the Devil drove a quite contrary Design, and sang a quite other Song, to incourage the Soul in a course of Sin; suggesting to it, that Pardon was an easie thing, and might be obtained without difficulty; however he hath changed his Note now, he is pursuing but the same Design, that is, the Ruin of the Soul, though it be by a quite contrary Method. But it is not always that a Soul under this Temptation talketh at this irrational rate, ordinarily it hath something to say, though nothing sufficient to build such a Conclusion upon; and as I hinted to you before, all that the Devil, or a Mans own Heart can say in the case, is either, 1. *That our Sins are too many* to be forgiven. Or, 2. *That they have been aggravated* with some circumstances, to that *degree, that they cannot be forgiven.* Or, 3. *That the time is past*, we have gone on *in them too long to be forgiven.* Or, 4. *That we have committed some particular Sins of too deep a dy to be washed out.* If we can but drive out the Devil from these Refuges, we shall leave

leave him nothing to say to a Soul to advantage this Temptation.

1. As to the First, *That our Sins are too many to be forgiven.* This *Suggestion* either hath no bottom at all, or if it hath any, it must be this: *That the Promises of Grace, and the Forgiveness of Sins, are limited to a certain number of Sins*; for if they be not, upon what colourable pretence doth the Devil endeavour to baffle the Hope of any Soul, by whispering to it, That its Sins are too many to be forgiven; if God hath no where said, he will not pardon a multitude of Sins, to what purpose, or upon what pretence shall a Soul Despair, because of the multitude of its Iniquities? But where in the whole Book of God shall a troubled Soul find any line to this purpose: *A Souls hope for Pardon dependeth upon the Word of God, and in reason must not the Limitation* (if any be of that hope) *be found in the Word of God too*; or are they not in all reason to be rejected, as the Fictions of our own Hearts, or Figments of our grand Adversary the Devil? Where the Word of God limiteth not the Will of God, upon what grounds do we limit it? Methinks in this case the whole Trinity speaketh unto us, in the Language that St. *Paul* spake to the *Corinthians*,

rinthians, in another Cause; 2 Cor. 6. 11, 12. *O ye, Corinthians* (saith he) *our Mouth is opened unto you, our Heart is inlarged: You are not straitned in us, you are straitned in your own Bowels.* Some thinks the Holy Trinity speaketh to us in the whole tenor of the Sacred Writing, *O you troubled Sinners, you Despairing Soul, our Mouth is opened to you*, to call those that have *abundantly sinned* to our *abounding Mercies. Our Heart is enlarged*, you are not straitned in me (saith the *Father of Mercies*) I have infinite Mercies, Mercies as the Sands which is on the *Sea-shore. You are not straitned* in me (saith the Son) I have an infinite Value and Vertue in my Blood; it is sufficient in it self for the Expiation of the Sins of the whole World, and every individual Man and Woman in the World. *You are not straitned in me* (saith the Holy Spirit) I after a multitude of Sinnings, *stand* yet *at the door of your Hearts and knock, and cry, if any Man will open, he shall come in and sup with me*; *yea*, let them do what in them lieth, I am ready to add my Efficacy, to give Faith, and to give Repentance, and this after a multitude of Sins. You are not *straitned in me*, where then are Sinners straitned? Oh *they are straitned in their*

own

own Bowels. They cannot find in their Hearts to *conſider their ways*, to *humble their Soul* for their ſins, to leave them, and to turn unto God: Thus are they ſtraitned in their own Bowels, and *they will not come to Chriſt that they might have Life.*

2. Secondly, *To this Suggeſtion doubtleſs we are to oppoſe what the Scripture ſpeaketh of*, the *multitude and abundance of Divine Mercies*, Pſal. 134. 18. *If I ſhould count them* (ſaith Holy David) *they are more in number than the Sand.* So *Iſaiah* 55. *v.* 6, 7. *Let him return unto the Lord*, and he *will have mercy upon him, unto his God, for he will abundantly pardon.* Thus you often read in Scripture, of a *multitude of Mercies*, *tender Mercies* in God; *Pſal.* 5. 7. I will come into thy Houſe in the *multitude of thy Mercies.* So *Pſal.* 51. 1. *Have Mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindneſs*; according to the *multitude of thy tender Mercies, blot out my Tranſgreſſions.* So *Pſal.* 69. 13. *Mercy in God* is but one thing, it is the Goodneſs of God looking upon one in Miſery, and helping and relieving him: what do we read of a *multitude of Mercies*, certainly it either ſignifies Gods *multiplied Acts of Goodneſs*, which are ſeveral Branches ſpringing out of the ſame Root of *Good-*

neſs and Mercy; or elſe the term is uſed, to ſignifie unto us, that there is a *Goodneſs in God proportionated to the multitudes of Sin and Miſery that are in us.* To what end do we read of multitudes of Mercies in God, if it were not to relieve us groaning under multitudes of Sins.

3. Again conſider, *It is the ſame thing with God to pardon multitudes of Sins as few*; yea, he *never pardoneth the Sins of any one Soul, but he pardons a multitude.* God muſt vail his Juſtice, and deny himſelf in his *Vindicative Juſtice* to pardon one Sin. There is no one Sin, but hath a kind of *infiniteneſs in it*, or rather contracts an infinite Guilt; for every Sin which we commit, is againſt an *infinite God*, againſt *infinite Juſtice* and *Goodneſs*; and nothing but *infinite Goodneſs* can remit it and paſs it by. And an infinite Remiſſion as eaſily extendeth to a *multitude of Sins* as to a few; ſo that as that good Prince ſaid unto God in the recognition of his Power, *It is eaſie with thee to ſave by many as by few.* So we may ſay in the caſe before us, *It is as eaſie with God to ſave from many, from the guilt of many, many thouſands of Sins, as from the guilt of a few*; eſpecially (which I ſhould have put in) conſidering there is alſo an infiniteneſs in the

the λύτρον, in *the Redemption Price* that is paid; if indeed that had been ſcant, ſomething might have been colourably objected; but that is commenſurate to the Goodneſs that is in God. The Perſon that died for our Sins, was *God-man*, an infinite Perſon; his Blood was of infinite Vertue, as to Satisfaction. Indeed the Papiſts ſtrain a great deal too far, to ſay, *That the leaſt Drop of Chriſts Blood was ſufficient to ranſome a World.* That is an idle *Monkiſh Hyberbole*, for there muſt be a powring out of his Life, ſo much of his Blood ſhed, as ſhould have determined his Life: But that there is a *Nuda Sufficientia* (we are not ſpeaking now of the *Sufficientia Ordinata*, how far Chriſt ordained it to be ſufficient) but that, I ſay, there was a bare and naked Sufficiency in the Death of Chriſt; for more than it ſhall ever be applied to. This muſt be granted by all, who will acknowledge an infiniteneſs in Chriſts Perſon. Nor yet ſhall the *Papiſts* from hence augment their Churches Treaſury to the value of a Farthing. Chriſt never left the Redundancy of the Vertue of his Death to Humane Diſpoſal: the Vertue of his Blood (as to all thoſe who ſhall by it have any Benefit) was ordered and diſpoſed of from before the Foun-

dation of the World; even from the time that the *Lamb was first slain* in Gods Eternal Counsels. Let them look to answer the *Papists* in this Point, who maintain *Universal Redemption* in the latitude of it. But I add farther under this Head, That *God never pardoneth Sin to any Soul but he pardoneth a multitude.* It is true, there is not a parity in Men and Womens Sins, either as to the quality or quantity; but, I say, *God never pardons any but multitudes of Sins: The Righteous falleth seven times in a day.* Sin is in every Soul, and it may say, *Our Name is Legion, for we are many.* If multitudes of Sins could not be pardoned, no Sinner could be pardoned.

2. Temptation. *But then, saith the Tempter*, or the tempted Soul (if you will) *Ah, but my Sins have received very high and great Aggravations:* I have sinned against *Light*, against *Love*; I knew I ought not to do what I did; I was warned by Ministers, checkt by my own Conscience, otherwise moved by the Spirit of God. I had Mercies above thousands of others; I sinned against all, *&c.* To which I answer.

1. This is indeed a very *sad circumstance*, a load of this nature doth often lie very heavy upon the Conscience; and a guilt

guilt of this nature, requireth a further and deeper Humiliation, Confession, Contrition; but the Question is, *Whether such Sins be capable of a Pardon, yea or no?* If they be capable of Forgiveness from a gracious God, all this is no ground for thee to Despair, and cast away Hope; refusing to be comforted.

2. If they be not *capable of Pardon*, it must be so *determined in Scripture*. Now the Revelation of God in his Holy Word, hath no where determined, that *no Person that hath sinned against his Light shall be forgiven*: and we ought not to conclude to our own Prejudice and Discouragement, as to an Act of God, what he hath no where in his Word revealed.

3. Thirdly, *There is no Sinner pardoned, but hath sinned against his Light and against Love*; so that the Question seemeth not to be about the Thing, but about the Degree: not whether one who hath sinned against *Light* and *Love* can be Pardoned, but whether one who hath sinned against *so much Light*, and *so much Love*, can be forgiven; and it will be very hard for thee to assign Sinnings against such Degrees of Light and Love, as none ever sinned against and were saved. There are in Scripture great instances of Pardoned

Sinners, who yet ſinned againſt great Degrees of *Light* and *Love* too. Take but the inſtances of *David* and *Peter*; *David* was a Man of much *Light*, he was, you know, one of the Pen-men of Holy Writ; he was a Man much beloved of God, he is ſtiled, *The Man according to Gods own Heart*: God mindeth him of how much he had done for him, taking him from the Sheep-folds, and making him King over *Iſrael* and *Judah*; giving his Maſters Crowns, Houſes and Wives; yea, and (as he tells him) was ready to have done greater things for him; againſt all this he ſinned in the matter of *Bathſheba*, and in the matter of *Uriah*: It is true, this coſt him many Tears, many Prayers, yet he obtained Mercy. *Peter* was a Man of *great Light*, and had been made the Object of *great Love*; Chriſt had ſaid to him, *Thou art* Peter, *and upon this Rock will I build my Church*; yet this *Peter* curſed and ſware, and denied his Maſter, and after this, when he had gone out and wept betterly, Chriſt remembred him; and I doubt not but you believe *Peter* is in Heaven. Thou canſt not ſay, that thou haſt ſinned againſt greater Light, or greater Love, than theſe two eminent Saints in Glory ſinned againſt. *To have ſinned out our Light indeed*, that

is, to such a degree as we have *no more Checks, no more Rebukes of Conscience*, this is very sad, and the *Interpretations of it be to the Enemies of God.* To be past Feeling, that is sad, but by thy Trouble and Complaining it appeareth that is not thy Case: but it is plain that many have sinned against Light much Light, and against much Love too, whom God hath from the infiniteness of his Mercy forgiven and rereceived up to Glory.

3. Temptation. But will such a Soul say, *It is true, had I in time turned unto God there might have been hope, but alas, time is past*; *time is past* with me: had I turned to *God in my Youth, but I am in the declining part of my Life*; *God hath said, His Spirit shall not always strive with Man. The Fig-tree was Cursed after Three years in vain expecting Fruit. God hath a long time been looking for Fruit of my Soul, and hath found none: I have sinned wilfully, after I had received the Knowledge of the Truth, there remaineth now* (I fear) no more Sacrifice of Sin, but a certain fearful *looking for of Judgement and fiery Indignation, which shall devour the Adversaries*; *Heb.* 10. 26, 27. To which, I say,

1. This is indeed *a very sad and bitter Reflection*, and I desire that such Complaints

plaints as these, when we hear them, may be sanctified, to all that have time before them, to take heed how they mispend it and trifle it away; but where this Counsel is too late, the Question that we have in hand, is, Whether there be a sufficient Warrant for a Souls Despair.

2. The sadness (Secondly) of this Case is aggravated, *from the appearances of Scripture for this Temptation.* It is generally held by Divines, That as *Countries* and *Nations* have their *Periods of Grace*, so particular Persons have their *Days of Grace too*, and *Periods*, beyond which Gods Spirit shall not strive with them; and it appeareth by that Text, *Heb.* 10. *That there is a wilful Sinning after the Knowledge of the Truth, after which there will remain no Sacrifice for Sin.* But what that degree of wilful Sinning is, and how it must be circumstanced, that is another Question? But to speak more directly to the Temptation.

1. In the first place, I would have thee seriously consider, *Whether the Freeness of Divine Grace in the Remission of Sins, be duly thought of by thee, who objectest thus against thy self.* Take heed thou hast not some Thoughts within thee, that thou shouldest recompence God by thy future Holi-

Holiness, for thy past Provocations; and whether that which discourageth thy hoping in God, and looking up unto him for Mercy, be not a prospect that thou art not like to have time enough to make this Recompence: If thou hast any such Thoughts as these, thou dost not well attend to the Promise of Pardon, which runs thus: *I will blot out thy Transgressions for mine own Name sake*, and we have *Redemption, even Forgiveness of Sins, through his Blood.* The end which God aimeth at in the Forgiveness of any Souls Sin, is *his own Glory*, the glorifying of the riches of his Grace, *not receiving the Homage of an Holy Life*, though that be thy Duty, and what God requireth of thee, yet, I say, that is not Gods great and ultimate end. *He will have Mercy on whom he will have Mercy, and extends Compassion to whom he will extend Compassion.* The Consideration upon which God doth it, is the *Price paid*, and *Satisfaction given by the Blood of his Son.* It is not for our sake, not for our future Works sake, but *for his own Name sake*, and for his dear *Son's sake*; that he granteth unto any, *Pardon* and *Forgiveness of Sin.* Now although the time of thy Life yet to come, in probability will not be commensurate to the time

time of Life, which is past and spent in Sinning and Dishonouring God; yet why may not the *great God glorifie the Riches of his Grace*, in the free Forgiveness of thee? Why may he not *exalt the Blood* of his Son, in washing thy Soul?

2. Secondly, *It is not for us to know times and seasons, which are in Gods Power onely.* It is true, God seemeth to have revealed, that *every Soul hath a set time, beyond which he will shew it no favour*; and that this is not onely the end of our Life, but may be sometime before our dying day; but *we know not what time that is*, and therefore it is rashness, for any Soul to conclude my time is past. Where have we any Directions from the Word of God to fix any such time, or to conclude it as to any period of time? We know the Master of the Vineyard called to some to come and Work in his Vineyard at the 11th. hour, and we know also that the Thief upon the Cross was told in the last hour of his Life, that he should that Night be with Christ in Paradise. Secret things belong unto God, Revealed things onely to us and to our Children. Unless we had some certain Rule to determine the Time to us, we have no Reason to determine it our selves, to discourage us from what his

his Word commandeth us as our certain Duty.

3. Thirdly, *Supposing there be an heart found in us to be sorry for our Sins, humbled for them, and to turn from them to God, and to accept of the Lord Jesus Christ and his Salvation tendred unto us in the Gospel*; it is *certain our time is not yet past*: The Reason is, because the promise of Pardon and Salvation is made unto such. So that no Soul hath reason to conclude there is no hope for him in God; but that Soul that laboureth under impenitency, and hardness of heart, and findeth in it self a resolution yet to go on in its sinful courses: And therefore you shall observe in that dreadful Text, *Heb.* 6. the Apostle saith of them that have been once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly Gift, and the Powers of the World to come, and have been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, *&c.* if they fall away, it is impossible *they should be renewed again by Repentance*; if they could Repent, it were not impossible *they should be Pardoned* or obtain *Eternal Life and Salvation*; but it pleaseth not God to renew them by Repentance: if thou findest an heart to Repent, to bleed for Sin and turn from it, there is no Reason for thee to Despair,

or

or to conclude it is too late for thee It is a true saying, That *True Repentance is never too late*; for it always hath the Promise of Pardon and Forgiveness annext.

4. Fourthly, as to that Text *Heb.* 10. 26. *If we sin wilfully after we have received the Knowledge of the Truth, there remaineth no more Sacrifice for Sins. It is not to be understood strictly as the word seem to sound*, as if it concerned all Persons that sin against their *Light and Knowledge*, but onely of *some degrees of wilful sinning*; for all the Sons and Daughters of Men would be in a sad state, if there were no Sacrifice for sin remaining for any, that after the receiving and owning of the Truth, did in any degrees knowingly and wilfully sin against God: But this also appeareth by the Context, and the Text, *Heb.* 6. to which this is apparently paralel; 1. It speaketh of *Adversaries* v. 27. 2. *Of such as trod under foot the Son of God, and counted the Blood of the Covenant, with which he was sanctified, an unholy thing.* It is apparent he spake of Christians *that made a total open Defection from the Doctrine of the Gospel to Judaism.* This is that which v. 26. He called the *forsaking the assembling themselves together*; *forsaking*

saking the Communion of all Christians; and a malicious contempt and despising of Christ, and of his Blood; counting it an unholy thing. *The Truth* which he here speaketh of, is undoubtedly *the Truth which he had before opened in this Epistle*; wherein he had enlarged in a Discourse to prove, that Christ was *truly God*, and *truly Man*, and the true *Messias* shadowed out by the *Jewish High Priest*. Now saith he, if a man *sin wilfully*, that is, having owned and acknowledged and professed this Truth, afterwards reject it, deny it, apostatise from the profession of it, leaving the Assemblies of Christians, shall joyn himself to the Assemblies of those who are the Adversaries of Christ, and continue and maliciously go on in that apostacy and defection: What ever Remedy he may dream of finding in the *Jewish Sacrifices*, he will indeed find that there is none of their Sacrifices will do him good, nor will Christ expiate for him; so there will be no Sacrifice for his Sin. This I take to be much of the sense and import of that Text, according to which it will not much concern one in thy Circumstances.

4. Temptation *But will some Soul say, There is a Sin that shall never be forgiven* (our Saviour hath told us so, *Math.* 12. 31. *Mar.*

Mar. 3. 28.) Saint *John calls it a Sin unto death*: The Apostle (admiting those two Texts, *Heb.* 6. 6, 7. and *Heb.* 10. 26, 27, 28. be to be restrained to that) saith of it, that those who are guilty of it, *cannot be renewed by Repentance, and that there remaineth no more Sacrifice for it.* I have committed that Sin, and therefore I know there is no hope for me, I have nothing to do but to *look for that fiery Indignation which is to devour the Adversaries.* Thus speaks the Tempter: Thus after him doth the poor Soul speak that is Tempted. To which I Answer,

1. *It is very unreasonable for thee to conclude that thou hast sinned the Sin against the Holy Ghost*, the unpardonable Sin, *till thou canst tell what the Sin against the Holy Ghost is*; if thou canst not tell what it is, how canst thou tell that thou hast committed it: Now it is not like that thou shouldest be able to determine a Question which hath exercised so long the greatest Divines, and yet remains not determined by them, at least not agreed in by any considerable consent. Some make it a Sin of which we are not now capable, the *denial of the Divine Nature of Christ, after they had seen his miraculous Operations, which God alone could do; and Reviling,*

Reproach-

Reproaching, and Persecuting him; notwithstanding all they had seen in him or heard from him. And it is plain, this is that which Christ in those Texts of the Gospel doth primarily and immediately speak of: But those Texts in the Epistle to the *Hebrews* cannot be thus interpreted; yet what this specifical sin is, is not agreed amongst the best Divines.

2. Secondly, *Many of those from whom we hear these complaints, apparently have not Light enough*, I mean not knowledge enough, to be under the guilt of this Sin; for that is apparent from *Heb.* 6. that whatever this sin be, it must be the sin of *knowing enlightened Persons*, such as have been once *enlightened*; as have tasted of the *Heavenly Gift*: So that ignorant Persons cannot be under this Guilt they must be knowing Persons, and such as have made a Profession.

3. Thirdly, It is also thus far agreed, That there must be a *Total* and *Final falling away* from the *Profession of Faith*, which Men have made, and this must be conjoyned with *Malice* expressed in Words, or *Deeds*, or both; such as may be interpreted, a doing *despight to the Spirit of Grace, a trampling under-foot the Blood of the Covenant*, an accounting it an

unholy thing, a Crucifying Christ a-fresh.

4. Fourthly, *There must be a Perseverance in this Apostacy and Blasphemy, to the end without Repentance*, or it cannot be this Sin: for the Apostle saith of such as commit this Sin, that it is impossible *they should be renewed again by Repentance:* and Christ saith, *That it shall never be forgiven.* Now it is certain any Sin that is repented of, may and shall be forgiven. I must confess, when I consider what woful Apostacies some in the days wherein we live, have made from the *Doctrine of Godliness*, and what *Blasphemies* come from their *Tongues* and *Pens*, against the *Operations of the Spirit*; imputing that to *Melancholick Fancies and Dreams*, and to *Impressions from the Devil*, which are from *the Holy Spirit of God*, and its Impressions, Teachings and Operations; and when I also consider with what an heat, and passion of Madness, many are carried out in Persecuting the Servants of God, and this in an age so ferrtile of means, that they either have known, do know, or may know other things: My Heart akes and trembleth for many poor Souls, and I cannot but fear, many more than we are aware of, are under this tremendous Guilt; nor know I how they can evince

the contrary, but by a timely sense of their Sins, Repentance, and Sorrow of Heart for them, and taking a new course; but yet I say *final Impenitency* must go to make up this Sin; which unless thou findest, thou hast no Reason, as to it, peremptorily to conclude against thy self: The Evidence of this truth often puts the Tempter to his last shift, and we hear often the poor Tempted Soul saying thus,

5. *Temptation.* Ah! *This, this is my case, I know I have not so sinned, but if I could Repent, if I could Believe in Christ, I might be Pardoned, I might be Saved, but I have not Repented, I do not Repent; my Heart is harder than the neather Millstone; I weep and howl indeed for my Plagues, I see I am a poor undone Creature, that makes me complain, and wring my hands, but I see nothing of the evil of my Sin, I shed not a tear upon that account, nor cannot, therefore there is no hope.*

1. It must be acknowledged that both *Repentance and Faith is the Gift of God,* and naturally no Man hath *a Power* to the one or to the other; *Acts* 11. 18. 2 *Tim.* 2. 25. and Faith is not of our selves, *it is the Gift of God*; *Eph.* 2. 8. *Phil.* 1. 29. The Question is not therefore (taking Repentance in a full and pro-

Per sense) whether thou *canst Repent or Believe*, but whether God hath wrought, or will yet work in thee a power truly to *Repent* and *Believe*: And how doest thou know, that God will not do that? For thou canst not conclude, supposing God hath not done it yet, that he will not do it before thy dying hour.

2. *Possibly thou mayest be mistaken in thy determining that God hath not done it*, from a mistake concerning the true *Nature of Repentance*; *a sense and sorrow for Sin* are but the *out-works of it*: True *Repentance* lies in the Souls *displicence to Sin*, and *hatred* of it, and *readiness to take Revenge upon it self for it*, and *Resolution and endeavour against it for the time to come*. I know it is not impossible that a Soul under *such Horrours as these*, may not have any true sense of Sin or Hatred of it, but even *Blaspheme God*, because of its Horrours, Terrours, and Affrightments; but let me tell you, the Instances of Souls are very rare, that are under great Terrours and Affrightments for Sin; so as to conclude there is no hope: and yet at the same time *Love*, *Delight*, *in such Sins*, take pleasure in them, and desire but occasions to commit them. I would ask thee seriously under these Terrours for

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some *Sins* thou hast committed, doest thou not from thine heart wish thou hadst not committed them? Couldst thou not even tear thy flesh, that ever thou shouldest be so far betrayed by the Lusts and Passions of thy depraved Heart? Wouldest thou now do the like again? What doth this speak but Repentance, so far as it can be judged of under thy present Circumstances? Indeed it is possible all this may be, and yet a Soul recovered out of these sad Circumstances, may again return with the Dog to its vomit and the Swine to the wallowing in the mire again; but this is not what at present thou canst conclude, to hinder thy Souls Hope and Confidence in the Mercy and Free-grace of God.

3. But admit thou canst not satisfie thy self that thou hast Repented or Believed, *yet may not God yet give thee an Heart to Repent and Believe*? What hindreth? Or if he may, what hindreth thy hope in the Mercy of God? Nay if thou doest what in thee lyeth, I dare assure thee that God will not be wanting in the Aids and Assistances of his Grace: But I have said enough to evince the first thing that I propoed, That there is no sufficient Reason, considering the Covenant of Grace, and Gods

Revelation of his Mind in the Gospel, for any Soul to Despair. The Issue of which is this, *That a Soul thus sinning, Transgresseth without a Cause*, and a Reasonable Soul in this acteth not according to Principles of Reason, or any just Conclusion drawn from Gospel Promises, or Principles. This is the first thing.

2. A Second thing which I would offer to such a Souls Reflection, is *the greatness of the Sin of Despair*. *Presumption* is a Sin, but yet *Despair* seemeth to be a far greater Sin: To Evidence which, I shall desire you to consider, 1. *What it Implieth.* 2. What must *Accompany it.* 3. What *better Consequents it hath.*

1. It Implieth and carrieth along with it, a denial either of *the Power of God*; *Or of the Goodness and Mercy of God*; or, thirdly of his *Truth and Faithfulness.* 1. Of the Power of God, It was laid to the charge of *the Israelites*, *That they limited the Holy One of Israel*; *Psal.* 78. 41. They said, *Can God bring us Water out of the Rock?* And *Can God give us Meat in the Wilderness?* Thou sayest, Can God Pardon such a Sinner as I have been? Can God give Repentance? Can God give me Faith in Jesus Christ? What is this, but to limit the Almighty? The unbelieving Noble Man,

of

of whom you read in the Book of *Kings*, when the Prophet fore-told that Food ſhould by the next day be at ſo cheap a Rate; ſaid, *If God would make Windows in Heaven, the thing could not be*: The Prophet told him *it ſhould be, he ſhould ſee it, but he ſhould not Eat of it*; and the Chapter telleth you he ſaw it verified, he ſaw it the next day, but he was *trodden to Death* by the Multitude. *Sarah laughed* (it was a laughter of unbelief) when the Angel told her ſhe ſhould have a Son: God puniſhed it gently in her, but more ſeverely in *Zachary*, that would not believe that his barren Wife ſhould have a Son; *he was ſtruck Dumb*: What doeſt thou do leſs than Queſtion the Power of God? If God can forgive Sins, why mayeſt thou not hope? If he can, even in the laſt hour give Repentance unto Life; why ſhould a living Man not hope? Ah! but ſaith this Soul, No, no, I do not doubt but God can do it, but he will not do it.

2. Secondly, Is not this to deny the *Lords Goodneſs and Mercy*? God hath exalted his Mercy above all his Name; when God proclaimed his Name to Moſes, *Exo.* 34. you ſhall find there 8 or 9 Expreſſions, all but one (*which will by no*

means clear the Guilty) signifying the Goodneſs, and Mercy of God (which hath made a very Learned Interpreter (*v. De Dieu ad Loc.*) doubt whether we have truly Tranſlated that Phraſe:) God triumpheth more in this than in any other part of his Name; he hath choſen to be exalted in his Arttribute of Mercy, he hath exalted it above all his Name: Now this is that Artribute, the Glory of which *Deſpair* Robbeth God of. *Preſumption* denieth him the honour of his *Truth*, of his *Juſtice*, and *Judgment*, which indeed he ſtileth his *Work*, but his *ſtranze Work*, as that which floweth not from himſelf; but is as it were forced from him by a meritorious Cauſe in the Creature. *Mercy* is the proper and natural Work of God, *flowing meerly from himſelf without any Cauſe in the Creature.* This is that, the Honour of which Deſpair denieth unto God, nor is it to be freed from a queſtioning the Power of God alſo; for although (as thou pretendeſt) thou doeſt not Univerſally queſtion the *Prerogative and Power of God to Forgive Sins*, yet thou denieſt his Power *to Forgive thy Sins*, yea the Sins of any who are in the like Circumſtances of ſinning with thee: for unleſs thou canſt charge him (with whom there

there is no reſpect of Perſons, with a particular Malice, or Ill Will to thee) in ſaying God cannot, nor will not, Pardon thy Sins; or there is no hope for thee: thou denieſt not onely the Power of God as to the Pardon of thy Sins, but the Sins alſo of any other whoſe Circumſtances of ſinning are as great as thine are: Now ſeemeth it to thee a light thing, O Chriſtian, to deny the Divine Goodneſs, and to ſet Limits to Infinite Mercy.

3. *Thirdly*, This Sin always carries with it alſo *A denial of Gods Truth, and Faithfulneſs.* He hath told thee, *Mat.* 12. 31. *That all Sin and Blaſphemy, wherewith any ſhall Blaſpheme the Son of Man, ſhall be Forgiven: That if thy Sins were as Scarlet, they ſhall be as Wooll; if as Crimſon, they ſhall be as White as Snow:* No, ſayeſt thou, I have Sinned, I have Blaſphemed, and it ſhall not be Forgiven: I have *Scarlet Sins*, and God will not make them as *Snow*. I have *Crimſon Sins*, and God will not make them as *Wooll*. What is this, but to put the lie upon God, to deny his Truth and Faithfulneſs, to ſay he hath ſaid it, and he will not do it; he hath ſpoken it, but it ſhall not come to paſs? But ſome will ſay it to me *after this rate of Arguing, God ſhould ſave all Men*

and

and Women breathing: These words are nomore spoken to me than to any other. I Answer, I do not urge these great and precious Revelations of the Divine Will, as grounds for Sinners to conclude that they *shall be Saved*, Pardoned, and Saved, without any more a-do; but onely as *general grounds of Hope* that there may perhaps be Mercy found with God for us; and as Assurances on the part of a gracious God, that if we miss of Pardon, and *Eternal Life* and *Salvation*, the fault shall not be justly charged on God, he is ready to forgive; but in our selves, who will not Repent, nor leave our Sins and turn unto God; who will not come unto Christ that we might have Life; still it remaineth the duty of us that would obtain this Pardon, to confess its Sins and forsake them, and to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ: but the *Despairing Soul* throws all the blame of its miscarriage upon God, and ordinarily, doth not say, *I do not Repent*, *I cannot Repent*; therefore there is no hope, but there is no Mercy in God: God cannot, or God will not Pardon me now, I say. This is an Impeachment, *as of the Power of God*, to forgive to the utmost, and of Christ to save to the utmost, so of that Goodness, and Grace,

and

and Mercy of God, yea, and of the *Truth*, and *Faithfulneſs of God.* Beſides, *What a Compariſon doth the Soul make here*, betwixt *finite* and *infinite*; betwixt which two there is no proportion: Let thy Sins be what they will or can, they can be but finite, *The Mercies of God are infinite.* The Sea is but a *finite Creature*, yet what can you imagine ſo great that the Sea will not ſwallow up and cover, that it ſhall not be ſeen any more. It is a Similitude which God himſelf doth ſometimes make uſe of, by it to expreſs the plenty of his *Forgiving Mercy.* See that excellent Text, *Micah* 7. 18, 19. *Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth Iniquity, and paſſeth by the Tranſgreſſion of the Remnant of his Heritage; he retaineth not his Anger for ever, becauſe he delighteth in Mercy: He will turn again, he will have Compaſſion upon us, he will ſubdue our Iniquities, and thou wilt caſt all their Sins into the depths of the Sea.* Now Deſpairing Concluſions, *That there is no Hope in God, that our Iniquities are too many, or too great, to be forgiven*; give God the Lie as to this. It is no more than the Scripture ſaith, 1 *John* 5. 10. *He that believeth not God, maketh God a Liar, becauſe he believeth not the Record that God gave of his Son*;

and

and this is the Record, that God hath given to us Eternal Life; and this Life is in his Son.

2. Secondly, This Sin, as it implieth these things, so it is always attended with *Unbelief in Gods Promises*, and with very hard and unworthy Thoughts of God. By *Unbelief*, here I understand, *the Negation of a Trust and Confidence in God*, and the Promises he hath made of those good things concerning which the Soul *Despaireth*. So that what ever can be said in aggravation of the Sin of *Unbelief*, is highly applicable in the aggravation of this Sin; for *Despair* speaketh the highest degree of *Unbelief* imaginable. It is one thing for a Soul *not to trust in God*, another thing to conclude, *That he is not to be trusted in as to my Soul*, that there is no hope for me in God. This speaketh the highest degree of Unbelief that we can imagine.

2. Besides, it necessarily carrieth along with it, very *hard and unworthy Thoughts of God*. The Soul cannot think reverently and worthily of God, when it is rooted in such Thoughts as these, that although he be a God that Pardoneth Iniquities, Transgressions and Sins, yea, abundantly Pardoneth, yet he will shew it

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no Favour, but adjudge it to an Everlaſting Miſery and Torment; nay, it is hard to conceive how ſuch a Soul ſhould forbear wiſhing, that *there were no God, that the Being of God were annihilated.*

3. Then in the laſt place, The *Effects of this Sin of Deſpair*, muſt needs be very ſad; for as a *Lively Hope* of obtaining any Good, *quickeneth the Soul* to the uſe of all thoſe Means which Reaſon dictateth, as probable Means for the obtaining what we deſire; ſo the Deſpair of obtaining any ſuch Good, quite *deadneth the Heart*, and taketh it off all Thoughts of *uſing Means* to obtain that which it concludeth with it ſelf impoſſible to be obtained. This is manifeſt upon the Experience of all ſuch Souls as at any time are under any *Fits of Deſpair:* They cannot be perſwaded to hear *Sermons*, to *Pray*, to *Read*; in ſhort, not to uſe any Means of Grace and Salvation. So that a greater Sin can hardly be imagined than this Sin of Deſpair is. Oh that thoſe would think of this, who find in their Souls any Motions, Temptations, or Inclinations towards it. That they would think how much Diſhonour God hath from this Sin above others.

3. Again, Certainly it muſt be advantage

tage to such a Soul, to *reflect upon those great Presidents* of Free Grace, which we have upon Record in Holy Writ. Let them remember the instance of St. *Paul*, who saith of himself, That *he was a Persecutor*, he was a *Blasphemer* and *Injurious*, but yet he obtained Mercy; 1 *Tim.* 1. 13. The instance of *David* restored *again to the joy of Gods Salvation*, after the guilt of *Adultery* and *Murther*. Of *Peter*, who received kind Looks from Christ, after he had thrice denied his Master, and that with the addition of *Cursing* and *Swearing*, that he did not know him. Of *Mary Magdalen*, out of whom the Lord had cast out Seven Devils. Let such a Soul think of these great instances, and of those who *Crucified the Lord Jesus Christ*, *Acts* 2. 36, 37, 38. yet at *Peters* Sermon were *pricked at the Heart*, encouraged by the great Apostle to *Repent* and be *Baptized*, in the *Name of Jesus Christ*, *for the Remission of their Sins*; and had the Promise of *receiving the Gift of the Holy Ghost*.

4. O let no such Soul neglect the *Reading* or *Hearing of the Word of God*, that is the Proximate Object of our *Hope*. God is indeed the primary and proper Object, none can give Remission of Sin or Eternal Life but God; but by the *Word*, and from the Reve-

Revelation of the good will of God in his Word, we come to Hope in God. I look therefore upon that as a great Conqueſt, which the Devil hath gotten over a Soul *Deſpairing*, when he hath perſwaded it not to hear, not to read the Word; that is indeed to omit the Means by which its Darkneſs ſhould be diſpelled, and a true and lively Hope ſhould be begotten in it.

5. To all theſe ſhould be added *Faſting* and *Prayer*, the *Efficacy of which depends* on this, That it is Gods Work to *beget the Soul to a lively Hope*, through the *Reſurrection of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt*; 1 *Pet.* 1. 3. It is true, a Soul in theſe Fits is not very fit for Prayer; how ſhall it *Pray in Faith?* But yet I would not have it wholly to neglect Prayer. But let it call in the Help of godly Miniſters and Chriſtians; let it ſend for the *Elders of the Church*, and *let them pray for it.*

6. I ſhould have added before, I ſhall now cloſe this Diſcourſe with it, *Let ſuch a Soul be often whetting upon it ſelf, and let others be ſuggeſting to it, the moſt liberal Promiſes of Free Grace and Pardon, and the greateſt Preſidents of Forgiving Mercy*, which the Scripture affordeth. And let there be frequent Repetition

petitions of them upon and to the Soul; poſſibly though at the firſt or ſecond offer, they may not ſtick to the Soul, nor the Soul take any Comfort from them, yet at laſt they may. But ſo much ſhall ſerve to have ſpoken to this *Black* and exceeding Dangerous *Temptation.*

FINIS.

Concerning

TEMPTATIONS TO Presumption.

CHAP. I.

The Text, Deut. 29. 18, 19, 20. *opened. The fitness of it to the intended Discourse. The Proposition founded in it. The Method of handling it proposed. What it is to presume. The Nature of Presumption opened.*

MOSES (the Servant of God) when he had a second time repeated the Law of God to the *Israelites*, as you shall find in that Book, which from that *Second Repeti-*

tion hath its Name *Deuteronomy*, commandeth the People, that having passed over *Jordan*, into the Land of *Canaan*, they should set up *Stones*, *and Plaister them with Plaister*, *and write the Law upon them*; and set up *these Stones* in Mount *Ebal*; *Deut.* 27. 4. and six of the Tribes were to stand upon Mount *Ebal*, six upon Mount *Gerizzim*; *v.* 12, 13. who were to say *Amen*, to the *Levites* pronouncing the *Blessings* or *Cursings* following, after *Chap.* 27. 28. *promised* to those that observed the Laws, or *denounced* against those that presumed to violate it; after this *Moses* exhorteth them to *Obedience*, from the great Works of God which they had seen him doing for them; *Chap.* 29. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 7, 8, 9. and from thence to the 15 verse, he ingageth them in a *Covenant with God*, for the observation of his Law. And v. 16, 17. shortly again mindeth them of what God had done for them, both in bringing them out of *Egypt*, and through the *Nations* of their Enemies. After all this, that great *Man of God*, from the general Corruption of Humane Nature, fore-saw there would be some *bold prophane* Persons, that would venture obsequiousness to their *Sensual Appetite*, to break this *Holy Law*; and not-

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withstanding all the Blessings annexed to the Observation of it, and all the Curses *entailed* to the Violation of it, would adventure upon their *Sensual Satisfactions*, and yet promise to themselves, not onely *Impunity and Freedom*, from the *threatned Evils*, but also the obtaining those *good Things*, for the obtaining of which, the *Observation of the Divine Law*, was made a *Condition*; he therefore adds v. 18, 19, 20, 21. *Lest there should be amongst you, Man, or Woman, or Family, or Tribe, whose Heart turneth away from the Lord his God, to go and serve the Gods of these Nations; lest there should be amongst you a Root that beareth Gall and Wormwood, v 19. and when he heareth the words of this Curse, that he blesseth himself in his Heart, saying, I shall have Peace though I walk in the Imagination of mine Heart, and add Drunkenness to Thirst; v. 20. The Lord will not spare him, but then the Anger of the Lord and his Jealousie, shall smoke against that Man; and all the Curses of this Book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his Name from under Heaven. v. 21. And the Lord shall seperate him to Evil, out of all the Tribes of* Israel, *according to all the Curses of the Covenant, that are written in this Book of the Law.*

It is true, these Words are in the *Old Testament*, but *Augustine* said true, That the *Old Testament* is *Occultatio Novi*, The New Testament in a Mystery; the New Testament *Revelatio Veteris*, the Old Testament explained: both of them the *Revealed Will* of God, the later onely the more clear *Revelation* of it: And it is as true, *That as Face answereth Face in a Glass*, so the Hearts of Men in one Age and Period in the World, answer the Hearts of Men in another *Period* of it. *Moses* in the Text afore-mentioned, describeth to you, 1. A *Sinner*, one *who turneth away his Heart from the Lord his God, that walketh according to the imagination of his own Heart, that addeth Drunkenness to Thirst*; and all this *after he hath heard the Words of the Law*, and the *Blessing* to them *that keep the Law*, and the *Curse* to them that violate this Law. 2. The *bold Presumption of this Sinner*, when he hath heard the Law, the *Blessings* promised to them that observe it, and the *Curses* denounced against them that *violate* it; yet he will flatter himself, *he shall have Peace, though he walks according to the imagination of his Heart*, and addeth *Sin* to *Sin*, *Drunkenness* to *Thirst*. 3. *The Fate of such a Sinner*, or the Issue of that Presumption,

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The Lord will not spare him, but the Anger of the Lord and his Jealousie shall smoke against that Man, and all the Curses in Scripture shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his Name from under Heaven. The Lord shall seperate him to Evil, out of all the Tribes of Israel, *according to all the Curses of the Covenant, that are written in the Book of the Law.* God hath also made a *Covenant* with People under the *New Testament*, even the same for Substance as with the Jews: He then gave them a Law, A Law for *Worship*, called the *Ceremonial* Law: A *Law* for *ordering their Polity or Common-wealth*, called the *Judicial Law*: A *Law* for the *Ordering their Conversation*, called the *Moral Law*. It is true, the two first concern not us, nor are any part of Gods *Covenant* with us *Gentiles*. Christ hath set up a *New Worship*, and taken away the *Law* contained in *Ordinances*; *Ordinances concerning a Worldly Sanctuary*. We may now *every where worship the Father*; *John* 4. 23, 24. *Carnal Ordinances* and *Typical Ordinances*, that Law is abolished; Christ the *Anti-type* being come. The *Substance* is come, the *Shadows* are fled away; we are not concerned in the *Judicial Law*, any further than in the Equity of it: it

was the *Revealed Will* of God, with respect to that particular People, and the Complexion of them. But we are all concerned in the *Moral Law*, that is the same in the Covenant with us as with the Jews, and the *Blessings* promised to the Observer of it, and the Curses denounced against the Breakers of the same. Onely as to the *Law-part*, the Law of Faith is more fully and clearly revealed; you read not so much of Christ and *Believing* in *Christ*, and in his Name under the *Old Testament*, as in the *New*; yet even then *Abraham* saw *Christs day* and rejoyced: and there is enough to prove, that *Faith in Christ* was then a *term of Salvation*. And for the *Blessings and Curses*, they are much more Plain, Spiritual and Comfortable, or Dreadful, under the *New Testament* than under the *Old*. All things happening to the Jews in a Figure. The Blessings under the *New Testament* promised, are *Pardon of Sin* and *Eternal Life*, more eminently the *Curses* eminently threatned, are *dying in Sins and being Eternally Condemned*. Now look as it was amongst the Jews, when God had plainly given them his Law, and threatned the Disobedience of it, with all manner of Curses and Judgements; and promised to the Obesrvance of it, all manner of Good;

yet

yet there was a Generation *that* were mad of their Lusts, and yet not willing to think they should be Cursed in that manner and undone, therefore promised themselves, that though they walked according to their own Lusts and Imaginations, and went boldly on in Courses of Sin, yet they should have *Peace*, *Outward Peace*, *Inward Peace*, *Eternal Peace*. So there are a multitude of People still that do the like, as to whom the Lord saith, *He will not spare them*, but make them eminent instances of his *Wrath* and *Vengeance*.

I have hitherto been discoursing of the *vehement Temptations*, That to *Atheistical Thoughts*, that to *Self-Murther*, and that to *Despair*; I come now to speak to a Fourth, *that of Presumption*. What the Women said of *Saul*, may be said of the other three; but what they sung of *David* may be applied to this, *Atheistical* and *Blasphemous Thoughts*, *Self-Murther*, may have slain their *Thousands*; but *Presumption* hath slain, and I fear goes on yet, to slay its Ten *Thousands*. Suffer me therefore to inlarge a little upon this so necessary an Argument: you may (if you please) take this *Proposition* as a bottom to my Discourse.

Prop. *That it is very ordinary for Persons enamoured and resolved upon their Lusts, notwithstanding the clear Revelations of the Divine Will, and the Conditions upon which Blessings are promised; as also as to the Threatings denounced against the Violators of the Divine Law; yet to presume upon their receiving the promised Blessings, though they live directly contrary to the terms on which God hath promised them.* In speaking to this Temptation (of all others most common and ordinary, and as pernicious, tho not so troublesome) I will first enquire into the *Nature* of *Presumption*, and when a Man or Woman may be said to *Presume* in a Theological Sense. 2. *What Tempters those are that* move to this Sin. 3. *What that seeming Good is*, which they propound to the Soul, to entice the Soul to presume. 4. *Upon what Grounds* (ordinarily) Souls are tempted to presume. 5. *What may be advised or done, in order to the avoiding this Rock.*

Presumption and to *presume*, are terms very variously taken, as they are used by *Lawyers* or *Divines*, or in our ordinary *Discourse* and way of Speaking. I shall neither trouble my self nor you with the *Amphibology*, and various usage of the Terms. I am speaking to it onely as a *Divine*

vine. In the general Notion of it, it signifies, *To take a thing too quickly before it be given*: A Proof taken for granted, before it be fully made according to *Rules of Law*, when the thing is made by it no more than very *probable* or *suspicious*, is called a *Presumption.* In Divinity an *Hope or Confidence taken up without just and sufficient grounds to warrant it, is* called *Presumption*; and without any more Discourse, that is the sense in which I am speaking of it, the *Objects* of it (as I am speaking to it) are the *Favour of God*, as to *the Pardon of Sin* and *Eternal Life and Salvation.* Those are the Objects of the *good Hope* of a true Christian, and of the *vain Hope* of a *presumptuous Hypocrite.* In short, *It is an unwarrantable Hope and Confidence, respecting the Favour of God, as to the Pardon of Sin*, and the *obtaining Eternal Life*; when Men and Women will be unreasonably confident of their *Spiritual Estate*, that they are in the Favour of God, that their Sins are Pardoned, and they shall be Eternally Saved; like the foolish *Virgins*, that when they wanted *Oil*, came and cried, *Lord open to us, when the Door was shut against them*; *Matth.* 25. 10, 11. or those *Matth.* 7. 22. that our Saviour tells us of, who should say to him (and I

pray

pray obſerve, he ſaith there will be *Many* under thoſe circumſtances) that will ſay, *Lord, Lord, have we not Prayed in thy Name, and Propheſied in thy Name, and in thy Name caſt out Devils*; to whom our Lord telleth us he will profeſs, *I never knew you, depart from me ye workers of Iniquity.* This is that which I call *the Sin of Preſumption*, and a great Sin it is, it would not elſe have been ſo ſeverely threatned as it is; *Deut.* 29. 20, 21. and Motions to it are *Temptations.* Let me in the next place find out our great Adverſaries in this caſe.

CHAP. II.

The Tempters in this Temptation, The Devil, our own Luſts, the World. How they ſeverally work in the enforcement of this Temptation. The Men of the World, eſpecially Teachers of Falſhood, have a very great Cauſation in theſe Temptations.

I Have heretofore told you, That every Motion to Sin (come it from whom it will, and in what degree it will) is a *Tem-*

Temptation, tho according to our common way of speaking, we onely call such motions *Temptations* when they are *Violent* and *Impetuous*. Now in regard we may be moved to Sin, from the *Devil*, or from the *World*, or from our own *Lusts*; there are three Principal *Tempters* against whom the *good Fight* is to be managed. *The World*, *The Flesh*, and the *Devil*. As to this particular Temptation, it may be from all three, or any of them.

1. Such a *Temptation may be, and often is from the Devil*; he is the *Destroyer*, and he goeth about like a *roaring Lyon, seeking whom he may devour*: He *Tempts* to *Atheistical and Blasphemous Thoughts*, to *Self-Murther*, to *Despair*; but these are his *Back-Game*, which he seldome or never playeth with the Soul until he seeth his Fore-Game lost. So long as he can perswade a Soul to go on in a course of Sin, and yet flatter it self with *Peace and Hope of its Salvation*, or confidence as to it, he will never perswade it to *Despair* or *Self-Murther*; the other *Temptation* doth his business with far less noise, and the effect of it will be every whit as certain, if not more: Who would fight his Enemy if he can kill him with a *sleeping Potion*? Now if you ask me how the Devil

vil worketh here? I Answer either more *Immediately* or more *Mediately*. More *Immediately*, *by Impressing Notions in our Minds, which believed, will raise up such confidences in us*: *Mediately*, *making use of others to suggest such Notions to us* and to perswade us to imbrace them. If once the Devil can Imprint such Notions upon our Souls as these, *That God will save all his Creatures, or all those that are Baptized*, or all that *are absolved and take the Sacrament when they die*, &c. or an hundred such like; and either by the force of his *Impressions*, or by the *Swasions* and Suggestions of others, induce Men to believe them, he hath done his Work.

2. Such a *Temptation* may be from our own *Lust*: *Lust* in the general notion of it, is nothing else but *inordinate desire*, whether it be the *desire* of a thing which God hath *forbidden* us (such was *Eves* desire of the *forbiden Fruit*) or an *unlawful irregular desire* of something which under *due Circumstances* or in a *lawful manner* we might have our *Appetite* carried out after. The *Peace and Quiet of our Spirits* is a *good thing*, and the true object of a good Christians desire; but when a Man or Woman desires *to obtain it any way and by any means*, this is *Lust*.

Now

Now by this *Lust* Men are *tempted* and *enticed* to *Presumption*, to hatch up a confidence, a groundless confidence in their Hearts, *that they are in Favour with God, and when they die, shall go to Heaven*; &c. tho they have no just ground for any such hope or confidence: Every Man Naturally wisheth well to himself, and hath no inclination to prophecy evil unto himself: *No Man loves to live under a constant awe and fear of such* a thing as having his portion for ever in a Lake, *burning with Fire and Brimstone*, and from his eager desire to be free from such a Torment conjoyned. 2. *With a desire not to deny himself in sensual satisfactions*, proceedeth this Temptation to lay hold upon any thing that may give him any colourable pretence to hope for a better Portion; and thus this Temptation may be from our *Lust*, as St. *James* saith, *Every Man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own Lust and enticed.* The poor Sinner hath a desire to *wallow in his Lusts* and to enjoy himself in the gratifying of his Senses, and withal he hath no *desire* to be in the middest of his *Cupps frighted* as *Belshazzar*, with a *Mene, Mene*; nor troubled with the sowre reflections of a Guilty and Condemning Conscience: Hence he

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is enticed to *Perſume* to *lay hold upon ſome Hope*, and to poſſeſs himſelf with ſome confidence, that what ever Miniſters ſay, he may walk in the Imaginations of his Heart, and *add Drunkenneſs to Thirſt*, and yet have *Peace*.

3. Such a *Temptation*, may be from the *World*, *the Things of the World*, or the *Men of the World*: The Things of the World, they are but *Mute inoperative Tempters*. They are gay and *gliſtering* to a ſenſual Eye: *Fiſtula dulce canit*: Like *Eves* forbidden Fruit. *When the Woman ſaw that the Tree was good for Food, and that it was pleaſant to the Eye*; ſhe took of the Fruit. The unſanctified heart looks upon theſe things, and ſaith, ſhall I *leave all my ſatisfaction in Pleaſure, unlawful gain*, &c. in hope of an unſeen reward? But indeed here *Luſt* is the Tempter; of which I ſpake before. *The Men of the World have a greater Cauſation*, both the *falſe Prophet*, and the *falſe Friend* or *Brother* perſwading Souls to truſt in *Lies*, to drink in *Notions* which are falſe, and otherwiſe repreſenting the *Will of God* to People as to *Pardon of Sin*, and *Eternal Life* and *Salvation*, then indeed it is. Such a generation there was of old, *Ahab's* Three hundred falſe Prophets, bad him

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go up to *Ramoth Gilead* and *prosper-Hananiah* perswaded the *Kings and Princes of Israel*, that God would break the Yoke of the *King of Babylon*; Jer. 28. 11. You read of others, *Jer.* 29. 31. *Shemajah* Prophesied and *caused the People to trust in a Lie.* There were Prophets in *Samaria*, *That caused Israel to Err*, Jerem. 23. 13. that *made People vain*, *spake Visions out of their own Heart and not out of the Mouth of the Lord*, *That said to those that despised the Lord*, *The Lord hath said you shall have Peace*: *and to every one that walked after the Imaginations of his own Heart*, *No Evil shall come unto you*: *That daubed with untempered Mortar*, *Ezek.* 22. 28. That cryed *Peace*, *Peace*, when there was no *Peace.* There were such in Christs and in the *Apostles times*, that taught another way of Salvation, then what they taught: This hath been the great Art of the *Papists*, to Interpret the *Law* and *Will of God*, with reference to Mans Salvation, into such a sense, as it might consist with a satisfaction of Mens Lusts; so as Men might keep their *Lusts*, and *yet go to Heaven* by a few external *good Works*; parting with a little money, or the like. The *false Teacher* hath an eminent Causation in these Temptations,

tations, he *causeth People to trust in a lie*: So that in Temptations of this Nature all our three Spiritual Enemies have great Parts.

CHAP. III.

The Seeming Good enticing in Temptations of this Nature, the enjoyment of unlawful Sensual Satisfactions, without regrets, or disturbances from Conscience. Several false Notions instanced in, which the Tempters instill into Men and Women; upon which they build up Presumptuous Hopes.

THe *seeming Good*, which is the Bait that covereth this *Hook*, is evident enough from the former Discourse: It is *The Enjoyment of unlawful sensual Satisfactions without Regrets or Disturbances from Conscience.* There are many Trees of

of *forbidden Fruit*, in the midst of the World wherein we live: As there are many other *Trees*, the Fruit of which *we may eat of*, under due Circumstances, and yet *live with God*; many *lawful Pleasures* which we may take and *use moderately*, many *Actions* which may tend to our *Profit* and *Advantage*, in order to our *comfortable Subsistance*, and a living in the World with *Honour and Reputation*; so that God hath not scanted us, and we need not Steal for the Satisfaction of our just Hunger: So I say there are many Trees of *forbidden Fruit*, which we may not eat the *Fruit* of, least we die. God hath not said to any, *Thou shalt not Marry*: But he hath said, *Thou shalt not commit Adultery*. He hath not said, *Thou shalt not enjoy Silver*, or *Gold*, *Houses*, or *Lands*: But he hath said, *Thou shalt not Covet thy Neighbours House nor Lands*. He hath said, *Thou shalt not Steal*. He hath not said, *Thou shalt not spend any day*, *but in the solemn Worship of God*. But he hath said, *Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day*. Now our *Lusts* encline us to *forbidden things*, *Nitimur in vetitum*; and these *desires of unlawful things*, or *lawful things in an immoderate*, *undue*, *and unlawful manner*, are what we *call Lusts*; yet

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Yet Men living under the *Revelations of Divine Truth*, and of the *Divine Will*, and hearing of an *immortal State* of Souls, and of an *Eternity* which waiteth for all Men after this Life, and that either in *Bliss* or *Misery*, we knowing that we must all die, and after come to Judgement, and receive an *Eternal* Reward, or an *Eternal Punishment*, cannot but *desire an Eternal Happiness*; and our business (I mean the business of a *Natural Man*, resolved upon the Satisfaction of his Lust, and yet desirous to shew himself one that believeth the Scriptures, and to cherish in himself an hope of an Eternal Happiness) is to close with such *Notions* and *false* Representations of the *Divine Will*, as may serve to cherish his hopes for a Living with God for ever; he in the mean time enjoying those Lusts and *sensual Satisfactions* to which he is most *biassed* and inclined: Hence it is that he *Presumeth*, that is he buildeth up unto himself *Hopes* and *Confidences* of *God's Favour to him* as well as others, and that he shall when he dies goe to Heaven, whatever Ministers say; who would put a Yoke upon Peoples Necks, that no *Flesh* is able to bear. Now it may be worth an enquiry, what false *Notions*

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those are, upon which Men build up these *Presumptions*, and which the *Devil*, the World, or our own *Lusts*, suggest and build upon, as upon a sandy Foundation. I shall name some, and onely in this place shew you, that if these Notions were true, they might give a foundation for such Confidences (at least some of them, others not) I shall reserve my demonstration of the falshood of them, until I come to the Applicatory part of my Discourse.

1. *That God will not Eternally Condemn any Man or Woman that he hath made, especially not any within the bosome of the Church:* This hath not been the avowed Opinion of many who have published their Sentiments to the World; *We Read* of *Huberus* and *Paccius* and some two or three more, who have adventured to publish such Sentiments to the World, but by the lives of too many it is proclaimed, that there are too many such *Atheists* in the World; for they wallow in such prodigious Filthiness as it is impossible but that they must conclude, that if there be an *Hell*, and it be not to stand empty, they are like to goe to it; for none can live more prodigiously lewd and profane lives than they do. Now

indeed if this Notion were true, if Men could but perswade themselves that they are *Gods Creatures*, it were enough for them to be confident of Gods Favour and their going at last to Heaven.

2. A Second Notion which some have taken up, is, *That Christ hath dyed for all, and all those for whom he dyed shall be Saved.* The latter part of this, is held by no learned Man that I know (though I could admit the former; I should not be very difficult as to the latter.) There are (as I have formerly told you) three Opinions concerning *Redemption*, as to the Objects of it: *Some saying he died equally for all*, as much for *Judas* as *Peter*. (Thus say the *Arminians*) others that he died for all, but *not equally*: He purchased a *certainty of Salvation for some, a possibility for all.* (Thus the *Methodists*, or those that are for the middle way.) *Others say he died for no more than the Elect.* I intend not to meddle with this great Question; onely I say, no judicious and learned Man, that hath held either of the two first *Opinions*, hath said, or will say, *That all those for whom Christ died, shall be Saved.* All agree in the Negative of that; but I fear, abundance of less judicious People are of that Mind;

and

and here build up their Presumptuous Hopes.

3. A Third Notion is, *That Sin is washed away in Baptism.* There are some learned and great Men indeed, who have thought, that the *Guilt of* Adams *Sin*, yea all *Original Sin*, *is washed away in Baptism*, and Men *Justified* in it; but they add, *If by Actual Sins they put not a bar*, so as all the Relief that Opinion affords (if it be true) as to Persons *dying in their Infancy*, as to whom they are as gentle, as *Augustine* was judged an *hard Father*; but I shall not enlarge on this, for there can be no other Pretence for this as to *grown Persons*, than their *Admission into the Catholick Church by that Ordinance*, and so it in part falleth in with the first Notion I named.

4. A Fourth *Notion* is, That *Men and Women have their lives in their own hands, a Power in themselves to believe and do whatsoever God hath required of them in order to their Salvation*; so as they shall not need look after their Salvation, till they come within sight of the Grave: Upon this they build up *Presumptuous Hopes* all their Life, hoping to have time before their Death to bethink themselves, and to turn unto God.

5. Under a fifth Head may come Mens false Notions of *Faith*, *Repentance*, and *Holiness*. They are told by *Papists*, that Faith is nothing else, *but an Agreement to the proposition of the Word* (and that they think they do.) That *Repentance* is nothing else, but *some sorrow for Sin*, and *a turning from some flagitious Courses unto God*: That *Holiness is nothing* but a *performance of some good Works Commanded in Gods Word*, or a *Resolution to do them*, if they have time; so as if they do upon their Death-bed *profess they die* in *the Faith*, and *declare they are sorry for their mispent Life*; and their *Resolution*, if God spare their lives, to live a better Life: This is enough to carry them to Heaven.

6. A Sixth is this, *That if they do but receive the Sacrament, and receive Absolution from a Minister before they Die:* This is enough to secure their Eternal *Salvation*: For *whose Sins they Remitt are* Remitted.

7. A Seventh is (and that is perfectly *Popish*) *That if they happen to die under the Guilt of Sin* (*if it be not one of the seven Mortal Sins, and that without Repentance*) *it is but lying some years in Purgatory*, and *they shall come out and go to*

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Heaven; nor would those Teachers of *Presumption* put that necessity upon them, if it were not to get money for *Masses to be said for their Souls*, or to get *Indulgences* for them, to help them out of the *Imaginary Fire.*

These are some of those Notions, which drank in, and imbraced by any, are the grounds of this *Presumption*, as to which I am now Discoursing.

The onely Question remaining, is what Christians should do to avoid dashing upon this desperate Rock.

CHAP. IV.

What to be done by Christians, to avoid dashing upon this Rock of Presumption. The first means to possess our selves of the falsehood of those Notions upon which these Presumptions are bottomed. Three of them instanced in several Arguments, to prove That Gods Creation of us,

Christs dying for all, And the Efficacy of Baptisme, cannot be, without any thing more sufficient grounds, for any upon which to hope for Pardon of Sins, or Eternal Life and Salvation.

1. THe first thing to be done, is for *Christians to possess themselves of the falshood of those Notions, which are the foundations upon which their Presumptuous Hopes are raised, and the Truths of God in opposition to them*; and here suffer me to run over all the *Notions*, I before instanced in; and to shew you the egregious Vanity of them. I begin with the first of them, *That God will damn none of the Sons and Daughters of Men which he hath made.* This I perswade my self, is in the heart of a great many more than will speak it out; let me therefore shew you the exceeding folly and vanity of it in some particulars:

1. In the first place, if I could say no more, yet this were sufficient, *That there is no such Revelation of the Will of God, in any line of Scripture.* Where hath God said, any where in Scripture, *That*

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he will save all Men? Now the strength of this lies here, That *Eternal Life*, *being a Gift*, a free Gift *of God* and Christs, that to which none is born, *Rom.* 6. 23. *John* 17. 2. given by Christ to those *whom the Father hath given him*; not to all, but to those *whom the Father hath given him*: it is the highest folly imaginable, for any to *hope* God will *give it him*, who is under no Circumstances, such as God hath said, he will give this great Gift to those that are under. You would think that Man mad, that should nourish an hope that you would give him your Estate, when you never told him, or any one else, that you would give him a Groat; and why are you then so secure for your Souls, whose Interest is so infinitly more valuable? Why should you think that God favoureth you, and will save you, when he never told you so, either implicitly or explicitly? Do you trust to the *Goodness* and *Graciousness of the Divine Nature*? Or to *his Relation, to you, as you are Gods Creatures*, he your Creator? You may as reasonably think that all the Devils in Hell should be saved. Why should not the Goodness of Gods Nature, as well extend to them, as you? They

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are your elder Brethren, the first of the Creation; more excellent Beings by Creation, than Man was: Where is your confidence then, *because God made you*; if you can neither conclude it, from the *Goodness* of the *Divine Nature*, nor from your *Relation to God*, as he is your Creator, nor from any letter of his *Revealed Will*: Whence can you lay the stress of your Souls upon this, *That God will save all.*

2. Yet something might be hoped from hence, with more Reason; *If God had not expressly Revealed his Will to the contrary.* Surely you would think that Man, or Woman, much worse than mad, that should hope you would leave him, or her, your whole Estate, when you shall have said, and sworn, that you would not give him a Groat. There is no clearer piece of the *Revealed Will of God* in Scripture, than that some of the Sons and Daughters of Men *shall perish Eternally*; Dan. 12. 2. Those *that sleep in the dust shall awake, some to Everlasting Life, and some to Everlasting Shame and Contempt.* There shall be some to whom Christ will say, *Depart from me, I know you not, you workers of Iniquity*; Math. 7. 23, 24. Some to whom he will

say

say, *Depart from me you Cursed, into Everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels*, Matth. 25. 41. Some *foolish Virgins against whom* the *Gates* of Heaven *will be shut*; v. 10. Some against whom he will come in *Flaming Fire to take Vengance, who shall be punished with everlasting Destruction*; 2 Thess. 1. 9. Some that *shall never enter into the Kingdom of God*; 1 Cor. 6. 9, 10. some that shall have their portion in the Lake, *that burns with Fire and Brimstone*; *Rev.* 21. 8. *Isa.* 27. 11. Yet certainly, God made these Persons: He did not make them to damn them, but by their Impenitency and Unbelief, they damn themselves. As he did not *make them to damn them*, so he did not make all with an *Intention* or *Resolution to save them*; let them live how they pleased: Now for us to build up hopes upon a foolish Notion, expressly contrary to the *Revealed Will* of God, is a most unquestionable Folly.

3. If God would save all those that he hath made, *To what purpose thinkest thou, hath he given out a Law to direct Mens Conversations; fortifying it with Promises not onely of good things in this Life, but of another Life, and with threatnings*

not

not onely of Misery in this Life, but of Eternal Misery in the Life to come, to those that Presumptuously violate it? The truth is, this is a principle that none can possibly entertain, unless he be turned *Atheist*, and believes no Scriptures, no *Hell* at all: For was Hell prepared for none thinkest thou? Settle thy self therefore upon this, That *God will most certainly turn into Hell, some, and those not a few, of those Men and Women which he hath made.*

2. A *Second* false Notion that some presume upon, is the *Redemption purchased by Christ.* Christ they say hath died for *All*, and by the term *All*, they understand *every Man and Woman.* Now to avoid this Rock, I shall offer these few things to a Christians serious Consideration:

1. *That although it be true in the Scripture-phrase and way of Speaking, that Christ died for All, and for the World; yet the Scripture no where saith, that Christ died for every Man:* And the term *All* doth very ordinarily signifie *Many*, or *All* under *such and such Circumstances*, of such or such a kind. It is said, *Matth.* 3. 5. that *Jerusalem*, and all *Judea*, and *all the Region round about* Jordan, *went out to* John, that is, *very many, or some of all sorts*; for none can imagine that every Man, Woman,

man, and Child, went out. There is but one Text that soundeth like a Proof that Christ died for *every Man*; it is that, *Heb.* 2. 9. where we translate it, *That he by the Grace of God should taste Death for every Man*; but it must be restrained by the next verse, where he speaks of *many Sons being brought to Glory*, and therefore he, the Captain of their Salvation, was made perfect *through Sufferings*. And in the *Greek* there is no more than ὑπὲρ παντὸς, for *every*; the Substantive is either θανάτου, and then the sense is, he tasted of *every Death*, or (which it may be is more probable) it must be supplied from the next verse, for *every Son who was to be brought unto Glory*. But not to enter into that Discourse, onely to caution you from laying too great stress upon Particles in Scripture.

2. Consider (what I before hinted) *That none of those who hold the utmost Extension of the Death of Christ, as to the Objects, ever said, That all those for whom Christ died should be saved.* Those indeed who believe Christ died only for the Elect, assert this; but those who hold Christ died *equally* for all, no more for *Judas* than for *Peter*; and those that say Christ by his Death purchased a certainty of Salvation for some, and

and a *possibility of Salvation* for all, yet neither of them will say, *That all shall be saved for whom Christ died*; which hath made me often admire at Mens heats for these Opinions, which if they could prove to be true, have no more Significancy. Indeed they seem to be calculated for nothing, but the *Assertion of a Power in the will of Man, to chuse and do what God requireth, in order to Salvation*, and so to be his own Saviour. Now if this be all that any understanding Man pretends to in his asserting that *Christ died for all*, how is it possible that any particular Soul can from his Belief of it, conclude *he shall be saved?*

3. Besides, this Notion is pressed with the *same absurdities*, as that which I first mentioned; for he that believeth, *That Christ died for all and every Man*, and therefore *for him*, must needs hold *Universal Salvation*, though not upon the account of *Creation*, yet upon the account of *Christs Redemption*; and this is not onely to hold, what God no where hath revealed in his Word, but that which is directly contrary to the *Revelation of the Word*; and that which is contrary to a *multitude of Promises* and *Threatnings*; and will make them to be meerly *superfluous* and *insig-*

insignificant. The conclusion is, That thou hast no ground from any such *Notion* (be it true or false) to conclude any such thing, as that thou art *actually reconciled to God, and shall be saved*; nor did ever any judicious Person so conclude: but I fear thousands of ignorant ordinary Persons build their Hopes here, and my self have by some been told so.

3. A third Notion upon which some may be *tempted* to presume, is, The *Vertue* and *Efficacy* of *Baptism*. The Jews, you know, rested much upon their *Circumcision*; and I fear too many amongst Christians, rest as much upon their *Baptism*, and their being in it *Regenerated and Born again*. To arm you against this Temptation, I shall, as to the other, offer you some few things to be considered.

1. *None can be confident upon this account, but they must consider Baptism, either as it is the Door into the Church.* From thence it must follow, *That all those that are Members of the Church of God shall be saved.* Or Secondly, As an *Ordinance of God, with which God doth constantly concur, in washing away the guilt of Sin by Vertue of the Blood of Christ.* I shall shortly shew you that which of these two ways soever Men look upon their *Baptism*, they can make no such *conclusion* from it. 1. There

1. There is nothing in Scripture to justifie such a Conceit, *That all those who are by Baptism admitted into the Catholick visible Church shall be saved*; for I pray observe in this Notion of Baptism,

1. It doth no more than *Circumcision did under the Old Testament, to which it succeeded.* Circumcision was the Door into the Church of the Jews, as *Baptism* is the Door into the Gospel Church. Now there is nothing clearer in all the Scripture, than that all those that were Circumcised were not saved. *Judas* was Circumcised, yet a *Devil*, a *Son of Perdition.* The *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, *Lawyers* and *Hypocrites*, against whom our Saviour (in the Gospel) denounced so many *Woes*, they were all *Circumcised.* The Apostle expressly tells us, that *Circumcision availeth nothing, nor yet Uncircumcision, but a New Creature. That Circumcision verily profiteth Persons, if they keep the Law, but if they were Breakers of the Law; their Circumcision is made Uncircumcision*; Rom. 2. 25. *That he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly, neither is that Circumcision which is outward in the Flesh; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and Circumcision is that of the Heart and the Spirit, and not in the Letter; whose Praise is of God, not*

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of Men; *v.* 28. 29. What is more plain than that of our Saviour, *Publicans and Harlots shall enter into the Kingdom of God, and the Children of the Kingdom shall be cast out*; *Luke* 13. 26, 27, 28. v. 25. he is speaking to the Jews, who were all *circumcised*, all Members of the onely Church, God (at that day) had in the World; *When once the Master of the House is risen up, and hath shut the Door, and you begin to stand without, and to knock at the Door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us, and he shall answer unto them, I know you not whence you are: Then shall you begin to say, We have Eaten and Drank in thy Name, and thou hast taught in our Streets.* I hope all these were Sons of the Church, and no ordinary Members of it, but v. 27. *He shall say I know you not whence you are, depart from me all ye workers of Iniquity; there shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth; when you shall see* Abraham *and* Isaac, *and* Jacob, *and all the Prophets, in the Kingdom of God, and you your selves thrust out. And they shall come from the East, and the West, and the North, and the South, and shall sit down in the Kingdom of God. And behold there are last which shall be first, and first which shall be last.* So as this alone

is no ground of Hope or Confidence to any Soul.

2. This appeareth further from hence, *That many Persons be Baptized, and Members of Churches, in whom Faith and Repentance, which the Word of God every where makes necessary to Salvation, are most certainly wanting.* Many Persons are Members of the Church by Baptism, who yet are *Drunkards, Whoremongers, Lyars, Unbelievers*; such as the Scripture hath expresly said shall *have their Portion in the Lake which burneth with Fire and Brimstone. Baptism* therefore in this Notion affordeth not the least ground of Confidence to any thinking and considerate Soul.

2. Suppose we take *Baptism* in the *Second Notion*, as it is an *Ordinance of God, instituted for something.* It is true, the *effect* of *Baptism*, what it is, and how far it extendeth, hath been a great Question amongst Divines: Some ascribing to it the *Justification of the Soul, and the Remission of Sins to all*; but then they restrain it to *Original Sin*, and so it onely (as I before said) gives us Comfort as to Children dying in their Infancy; others maintain, *The Regeneration of Elect Infants by Baptism.* I shall freely tell you what I judge is all in this Cause.

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The most of those *Baptized*, in the time of the *Apostles*, were Persons grown up, who had first made a visible Profession of their *Repentance* and *Faith* in *Christ*; to these *Baptism* was a *Seal of the Forgiveness of Sins*, and an *Engagement* to an *Holy Conversation*; as you read, *Rom.* 6. 4; *&c.* To Infants it is a Seal of the *Covenant of Grace*, as exhibited to Mankind. That in case they do *Repent* and *Believe*, their Sins shall be washed away with the Blood of Christ. To these it is *an Ordinance of Admission* into the Church. To these it is *an Engagement to be the Lords*; an *Avouchment of God for their God, and Christ for their Saviour.* To these, if when they grow up, they shall *Repent and Believe*, it shall be as a *Fountain of Living Water, springing up in the Soul to Eternal Life*; they shall (as the Apostle instructeth the *Romans*) *Rom.* 6. 4, 5, 6. fetch Arguments, obliging them to *die unto Sin and to live unto God.* Whether it hath any such *immediate Effect*, as to *all*, to *justifie them from the guilt of Original Sin*, or *to Regenerate them*, that is, to make a change in their Heart, I shall not dispute, but cannot prove it, nor do understand how possibly it should have any further effect of this Nature, than *Circumcision* had to

the Jews: I am sure the Holy Scripture makes Pardon of Sin and Justification, not the necessary or ordinary Effect of Baptism, but of *Confession of Sin*, *True Repentance*, and *forsaking of Sin*, and *True Believing* in the *Lord Jesus Christ*. Flatter not your selves therefore, if there be any Soul that liveth in any known course of Sin, that never confessed his Sins and forsook them, nor knew what godly Sorrow for Sin meant, nor what it was to receive the Lord Jesus Christ, and to believe in him; onely knoweth he was *Baptized*, and he *liveth in the Church*, and is called a Christian, and here he resteth, not doubting, but being confident that he shall be saved. Let me tell him or her, he *presumeth*, and trusts his Soul upon a Lie; and that which no weighed Divine, of any Perswasion, would ever say was a sufficient bottom to rest his Soul upon. None ever said that Baptism washed away *Sins past and to come*; and those that do ascribe *Justification* to *Baptism*, make it such a state as may be lost, and is lost by a course of *Actual Sinning*.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

The Notion of a Power in Man to Repent and Believe, agreed by few, if true, no ground of hopes for Eternal Life. Why Mistakes about the Nature of Regeneration, Conversion, Saving Repentance, Faith, Holiness, great Occasions of Presumption. The Truth as to those Notions enquired and proved. What Regeneration, Repentance, Conversion, Faith, Holiness, is necessary to Salvation, and to the raising any Hopes in us with Relation to it.

4. A *Fourth Notion* which I instanced in as a cause of Presumption, was this, *That every Man and Woman hath his Life in his hands*, I mean a *power in and of himself* (supposing the Common Grace of God denied to none) *to do all that*

God requireth of him in order to Salvation, is a power to *Repent*, to *Believe*, to *Love God*, &c. Hence many think that there is *no haſte* for Men to *deny themſelves*, or to *take up the Croſs*, or to *follow Chriſt*; they may ſtay till *they are old*, and their Eyes can be no longer pleaſed with *Seeing*, nor their *Ears* with *Hearing*; if then *they do but Repent and Believe*, all is well enough. As to which give me leave to ſpeak two or three things.

1. As brisk as this Opinion ſeemeth to be in the World, I could never yet meet with any ſo hardy as to affirm, *That theſe things were within the Power of Man, without the Aſſiſtance of Special Grace.* I have met with many that have talked high for the *Power of Mans Will*, but when they have been brought to a cloſe Diſcourſe, they would aſſert it no farther than either as to *Moral Actions*, or Acts of *Moral Diſcipline*. They would affirm indeed, that a Man hath a power to *go to Church*, inſtead of going to the Tavern, to turn away his Foot from the *Houſe of an Harlot*, to do *Juſtly*, and an hundred ſuch things: to *read*, to *hear the Word*, to *pray*, to *conſider his Sins*. Now theſe are things which none denieth, onely we ſay, his power as to theſe is much weakened by the fall. So

as

as we doubt whether by *Common Grace*, and all the *Natural Power* Man hath, he can do these materially good Actions, when he is pressed with a *vehement Temptation*: But I say I could never yet meet with any that would say, It is in the *power of Man* to *Believe*, to *Repent savingly*, to *Love God*, &c.

2. If any doth say so, *He saith what is contradicted by a multitude of Scriptures.* But it is not my work to enlarge here on that Discourse.

3. In the next place, Those Divines that do hold the greatest Natural Power in the Will of Man, yet do say, *Time may be past*, that a Man may have sinned away this Natural Power, and have his Heart so hardened in a Course of Sinning, that he may have lost this Power, and so be concluded to an *Eternal Misery*, which alone (to considerate Souls) is enough to spoil its Presumption from this Head. For how shall I, who go on in a Course of Sin, knowingly *presume*, because I have a power in my self to turn when I will, if it be possible, that I may by a Course of Sinning have so provoked God, as he may have given me up to a judicial blindness of Mind and hardness of Heart.

4. Admitting thou hast *such a Power*,

if it ſtill remaineth eſtabliſhed, that this Power muſt be produced into *Act*; and that before thou canſt enter into Heaven, thou muſt actually *Repent and Believe*; *how doſt thou know thou ſhalt have time for it*? May not God take away thy Soul with a ſtroke? May he not come upon thee on the ſudden, and ſay, *This Night thy Soul ſhall be taken from thee*; and then what doth thy Power ſignifie? Doeſt thou not ſee Men and Women die ſuddenly? So that a pretence of ſuch a Power in thee ſignifies nothing, but that thou art more inexcuſable by it, if indeed thou hadſt ſuch a Power, that thou didſt not uſe it for the end for which thou hadſt it.

5. I proceed now to the great grounds of Mens Preſumption, *viz. Miſtakes as to the* Nature of *Regeneraton*, *Faith*, and *Holineſs*. The Scripture makes all theſe ſo neceſſary to Salvation, that altho ſome ignorant Perſons may build up to themſelves idle and preſumptuous Hopes; becauſe *God made them*, and Chriſt died for all Men, and they are *Chriſtians* and *Baptized*, &c. yet conſiderate Perſons plainly muſt ſee, *That unleſs a Man be born again, of Water and the Spirit, he can never enter into the Kingdom of God*; they

they are the indisputable words of our Saviour, *John* 3. 3. And St. *Paul* plainly saith that, *Neither Circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new Creature.* Our Saviour saith: *He that believeth not,* is *condemned already, he shall never see Life, &c.* The Apostle saith, *without Faith and Holiness, no Man shall see the Lord.* No considering Man therefore can possibly raise up to himself any hopes of the Pardon of Sin, or Eternal Life, but he must satisfy himself, that he is *Regenerated*; that he doth *Believe*; and that he doth *so far Obey, as God will accept it.* To this purpose nothing can serve the Devils turn so effectually, as for the Soul to be deceived in the *Notions of Faith and Holiness*: Nothing can be more the concernment of the Soul, than to take care it be not deceived. There have been several Notions of *Faith* that have striven for *Mastery* in the World.

1. The first is the *Popish Notion*, who make Faith to be the *Souls Assent* to the *Proposition of the Word*, which may be without any *Practical Obedience*; for many a Man assenteth to the truth of the Proposition, which yet he alloweth not an influence upon his Life; and indeed this is such a *Faith*, as the Apostle tells us, the

the *Devils* are poſſeſſed of, *They Believe and Tremble.*

2. The Second is their Notion, who make *Juſtifying Faith* to be what our Saviour tells us it is, *John* 1. 12. *A Receiving of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, a cloſing, an hearty cloſing with him as offered in the Goſpel, hoping, truſting in him, and him alone for Salvation.* No Soul can poſſibly do this, that doth not firſt Aſſent to the *Propoſition of the Goſpel*, and agree to what that Revealeth concerning Chriſt; both as to his Perſon, and as to his willingneſs to Save: But it is poſſible that a Soul may *Aſſent to thoſe Propoſitions*, and yet not *Receive Chriſt* upon the Terms he propoundeth. This Receiving Chriſt and Truſting in him as their Saviour, they ſay neceſſarily draws on *Holineſs* and *Obedience* (though *Faith* and *Love* are two things) for the rational Nature of Man will not ſuffer him to hope or truſt in another for any kindneſs, which he hath promiſed upon Terms, without the fulfilling of thoſe Terms upon which it is promiſed; but this they ſay may be without any *certain Aſſurance* of the Souls Acceptation, which a man cannot have until he be Juſtified.

3. A Third, is the Notion of them *who make*

make it a full Assurance of the *Love of God*; but *yet such a one as obligeth the Soul to all manner of Duty*: and this seems to have been the Notion of some *Eminent Divines* upon our first *Reformation*, but is rejected by latter Divines, as it being not possible that that should be an *Instrument* in our *Justification*, which it is not possible that any Soul should have till it be *Justified*: besides that many a Pious Devout Soul hath not arrived at this.

4. Others make it to be a confident *Perswasion, that Christ died for them*; whether they find themselves obliged to Live to him yea or no.

5. Others make it to be a *Practical Assent* to the *Gospel*.

The danger of a Souls *Presuming*, is from the first and the fourth of these principally. If Men and Women think they do *Believe because they do agree to the Proposition of the Gospel*, they may easily run away with a vain Imagination, that all the Promises of the Gospel are their Portion, when indeed not one of them belongs to them; because this *Believing is not that Believing which the Scriptures make necessary to Salvation*: for the evidence of which, suffer me to offer

these

theſe few things to your Conſideration.

1. Becauſe this *Aſſent* may be *without any Holineſs or Conformity to the Will of God*: Murtherers, Traytors, Thieves do agree to the Propoſition of Humane Laws, though they prodigiouſly violate them. There may be an Aſſent of the Underſtanding to a Propoſition, to which Mens Luſts and Paſſions ſuffer them not to live up to; but we know that *without Holineſs none can ſee God*, and therefore this cannot be *that Believing* to which the Promiſes of *ſeeing God* and *living with him* are annexed.

2. Becauſe as I ſaid before, *the Devils thus Believe*; yea I believe better than the moſt of Men do. For our Aſſent to a Doctrine according to the workings of our Reaſonable Natures, is more or leſs, according to our Evidence of it. Now the Devils have ſeen the Propoſitions of the Goſpel, *That Chriſt is the Eternal Son of God*: *That he was made Man, and died for our Sins.* Theſe are Propoſitions, which the *Devils* having been in the World ever ſince the Creation, muſt needs ſee in a *better Light* than any Man can do, who onely ſeeth the truth of them by the light of *Reaſon*, or the *Revelation of Scripture*,

ture, not imprinted upon his Soul by the *Demonstration of the Spirit*, Revealing particularly to the Soul what is generally Revealed in the Word.

3. Thirdly Consider, That every where in Scripture, *A Person*, the *Person of Christ*, *is made the object of that Faith; to which the Promises of Life are made*: It is made a believing *in Christ*, *on his Name*, a *Receiving of him*, *a comeing to him*. Now a *Proposition*, not a *Person*, is the object of *Assent*: We indeed sometimes say, We *Assent to such*, *or such a Person*; But the meaning is, we *agree to such a Proposition*, which he hath delivered by word of Mouth, or by Writing. The Object of Justifying Faith, the Scripture makes to be the Person of the Mediator: I therefore begg of you, to take heed that you deceive not your Souls, by this Notion of *Faith*.

And take as much heed of their wild *Notion*, who make *Faith to be nothing else* but an *assumed confidence that Christ died for them*, let them live as they list. This separateth *Faith and Holiness*, without *which no man shall see the Lord*; and is indeed nothing better in it self, than a most bold and unwarrantable presumption, exclusive of that *fear* and *trembling* with which we are com-

commanded to *work out our Salvation.*

Their Notion is far better, who make Faith to be a *practical Aſſent*, but ſtill (I pray obſerve) the *Act of the Soul*, is made to be *Aſſent*, and the *Object of Aſſent* can be no other than a *Propoſition*, and for my own part, I cannot think this the *Act* of that *Faith* that *Juſtifieth*; for the Object of that Act as I ſaid before, is in Scripture conſtantly made the *Mediator himſelf*, not a meer Propoſition: I am afraid of this Notion, as calculated to juſtle Chriſt out of the place of a *Mediator*, wherein God hath ſet him; which was not onely to treat with his Father about the Terms of Mans Salvation, but to ſtand as the *middle Perſon between God and Man, to merit Salvation for us, by his Active and Paſſive Obedience, by a gracious Act of God to be reckoned to us, upon our Acceptance of him, and truſting the Weight of our Souls upon him*; which cannot be without our *Aſſent* to the *Propoſitions of the Word:* for upon the Credit of that onely it is, that the Soul applies it ſelf to Chriſt, and goes to him and receiveth him: Nor can it poſſibly be without *practicial Holineſs*, and a *Regard to all Gods Commandments*, and a ſincere indeavour to obſerve them; for

for as I said before, he must talk like a mad-man, that should pretend to hope in, or trust to another, for a great benefit, which that other hath promised, upon such or such Conditions, whilest in the mean time, he neither doth nor regard to perform those Conditions; and let him talk what he will, he cannot heartily and truly hope for such benefits: But yet *Believing* is not a *meer Assent*, nor is it *practicial Holiness*, but a *closing with* and *receiving* of Christ as the *Mediator* and *Saviour* of Man upon the Terms of his Revealed Will. And I do very much fear that he who hopeth for *Pardon of Sin*, *or Eternal Life* and *Salvation*, without *this believing*, *will never see the Face of God.*

2. But as false *Notions of Faith* are to be taken heed of, as exceeding contributory to Presumption: So must false *Notions of Repentance and Holiness*, *be equally taken heed of.* The Popish Divines, have infinitly contributed to deceive the World here. *Repentance* in its true Notion, *is an hearty sorrow for Sin*, *bringing forth an hatred and detestation of it*, *and utmost indeavours for the forsaking of it.* The *Papists* make it to ly in some *Attrition*, *Auricular Confession*, *Satisfaction*,

on, doing *some good Works*, or some Acts of *External Discipline* and *Penance*, and saying they are *sorry*, *&c.* It is manifest, that the Will of God makes *Repentance* necessary to *Remission of Sins and Eternal Life*, Acts 2. 38. *Repent every of you in the Name of Christ, for the Remission of Sins*; 3. 19. *Repent therefore and be converted, that your Sins may be blotted out. God commandeth all Men to Repent*, Acts 17. 30. We must *Repent* and *turn to God*, Acts 26. 20. Now admitting that *Repentance* comprehends not onely, a *sense of Sin and sorrow for it*, but an *hatred of it*, and a *turning from all Sin to God*; and Men be possessed that it is no more than to *own our selves Sinners*, to *confess our Sins*, let it be in the *Ears* of the Priest, or in the *Congregation*; *and profess a sorrow for them*, whether we *forsake them or no*: It is an easy thing for Men and Women upon these slighty and little performances, to presume and promise to themselves *Remission of Sins and Eternal Life*; for *Repentance hath the promise of both annexed to it*. But Christians do not mistake, to your own destruction, Men may go to God a thousand times, and own to him, and that with Tears, that they have *Sinned*; they may reckon

reckon all particular Sins; they may confess them as *Papists* do, in the Ears *of the Priest*; they may *confess* them as *Protestants* do, in their *Closets*, in their *Families*, in the *Congregation*; if this be all, it is far enough from *Repentance*. Judas *repented* and went and *hanged himself*, Mat. 27. 3. *He that confesseth his Sins and forsaketh them, shall have Mercy*, Pro. 28. 13. And whoso hopeth for Mercy and Forgiveness from God, and Eternal Life, upon any other *Repentance*, will find he doth but *Presume*; and this *Repentance* must proceed from, and is a part of *Regeneration*, which is a *change of the Heart, and of the whole Man*: Repentance signifieth no less; it is μετάνοια, a change of the Mind; and μεταμέλεια, a change of Mans *Counsels* and *Designs*; it doth not lie in the *dropping* of a *few Tears*, nor in a little *formal acknowledgment* of *Guilt*, but in such a *sense of Sin* as produceth an *hatred* and *detestation* of it, and a *leaving* and *forsaking* of it: Now if Men take *Baptisme* for *Regeneration*, and *Confession* and some *Acts of Discipline* for *Repentance*; and turning from some particular flagitious courses for *Conversion*, it is an easy thing for them to deceive their own Souls by *Presumption*, and to snatch at the pro-

 mises,

miſes, and take up *haſty* and *groundleſs hopes* of the *Pardon of Sin*, and of *Eternal Life and Salvation*. Nor is there any Armour of proof againſt this *Fiery Dart*, but the poſſeſſing your Souls with the true Notion of theſe things. Conſult the Holy Scriptures, ſee in what they make true *Repentance*, *Saving Faith*, *Regeneration*, and *Converſation to lie*. The Holy Scriptures alone can make you wiſe in theſe things, and whatſoever Notions of theſe things you take up, if they be not juſtified from holy Writt, there is no truth in them: *Faith in Chriſt*, *Repentance for Sin againſt God*, *Regeneration*, *Converſion*, are things we ſhould never have thought of, at leaſt not as things neceſſary to Eternal Life and Salvation, if the Scripture had not revealed them to us as ſuch; and from the Holy Scriptures alone we muſt take the meaſures of them. That alone is *ſaving* Faith, that alone is *Regeneration*, *Repentance unto Life*, *Converſion*, which the Scripture makes ſo. Let who will give you their *Notions* of theſe things, bring them to the *Light*, to the Holy Word of God; and withal remember to *compare Scripture with Scripture*, for in the Scriptures all theſe Terms are taken in ſeveral Senſes. St. *James*

faith, the *Devils Believe.* Simon Magus *Believed* and *was Baptized*, Judas *Repented*, yet none of these were saved. Consult therefore the Scriptures, where they speak of these things, as the Conditions of Pardon, and *Eternal Life* and *Salvation*, to which the *Promises are annexed.*

But yet again there are also *false Notions* of other parts of Holiness taken up, as conducive as any other to this *Presumption.* The Scripture you know makes *Holiness* necessary to Salvation: It tells us, that without it we shall never *see God.* Take heed of *false Notions of this*, that *Holiness* lyeth in an *Obedience to Gods Commands*, none can deny, and that as well in the avoiding and taking heed of whatever the Law of God forbids, as *doing what the Law of God commandeth*; onely let me mind you,

1. *That the Law of God doth not onely respect the outward, but the inward Man*, *Jer.* 31. 33. *Psal.* 51. 6. *Psal.* 5. 9. *Math.* 5. *Ro.* 2. 29. This our Saviour sufficiently justifieth in that better Interpretation of the Law which he gave, than that which was given by the *Scribes* and *Pharises*, who made the violation or observation of the Law, to be onely in the

External overt Acts: The Law forbidding Men to *Kill*, forbiddeth them any inward Motions of their Hearts, any Passions tending thereunto.

2. That the Law of God; *Commanding the end*, or *forbidding the end*, doth also *command or forbid all means tendent to such an end.*

3. *That the performance or forbearance of these things commanded in the Law of God, is not Holiness, unless it be out of a Principle of Love* and *Obedience* to God: A man may do what God hath commanded, and yet not eying the Command of God, be carried out to it from other *Motives.* Now this is no *Obedience*, no keeping of the Commandements of God.

4. That no *Obedience is true*, but what is *Universal*: I do not say *perfect* (for who liveth and sinneth not?) but *Universal.* There is an equal respect to the whole Law of God, *Psal.* 119. 6. *Then shall I not be ashamed* (saith *David*) *when I have respect to all thy Commandements:* The Reason is plain, because who *so doth* or *avoideth* an *Action purely upon this Reason, because God hath commanded, or God hath forbidden it, will find himself under the same Obligation to do whatever God*

God hath commanded, and to avoid whatsoever God hath forbidden; yet is not a Christian to measure his Obedience from his performance, but from the regard which he hath in his Heart to the whole Law of God; conjoyned with a proportionable endeavour, tho our Corruption will sometimes be too hard for us.

5. If a Man or Woman hath built up *his Hopes*, as to the remission of Sins (of which he as yet hath no *Assurance*) and of Eternal Life upon this, that God having in the Gospel made a Revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ, as he upon whom he hath laid the *Salvation of Men*; and having wrought in his Heart a firm and steady Assent, to what God hath there revealed, and inabled him to accept of this Salvation, and to close with Gods way of Salvation, casting all the Concerns of his Soul for Pardon and Salvation upon Jesus Christ; and that he hath by his Spirit made a change in his Heart; that he now hateth all Sin, and loveth God and the Commandments of God, and hath a regard to them all, desiring to do whatsoever God hath commanded, and to avoid whatsoever he hath forbidden, and that because he hath commanded the one and forbidden the other; and accord-

ingly endeavoureth in his whole Converſation, though he be many times over born with *Temptations*, and finds *a Law in his Members, rebelling againſt and prevailing againſt the Law of his Mind, and bringing him into Captivity to the Law of Sin.* This Man now builds his Hopes not preſumptuouſly, but upon the clear *Revelation* of the Will of God in his Word. But leſs than this is no better than *Preſumption* from falſe Notions, taken up of *Regeneration*, *Converſion*, *Repentance*, *Saving Faith*, and *True Holineſs*. Yet further, *In order to the avoiding of this Temptation, take heed of taking* up *ſcanty* and *narrow Notions* of the *Law of God.* It is indeed a *ſnare* unto a *Soul* ſo to interpret the *Divine Law*, ſo as to *doubt* and *fear* Actions that are lawful, as if they were forbidden. But it is a more dangerous Rock for a Man to daſh upon, ſo to *interpret Gods Law*, as to make thoſe things lawful which *God hath forbidden*; or to underſtand thoſe things as *unlawful*, or at leaſt indifferent, which God hath commandeded; but I hinted it before to you and I now tell it you again. There is none that is but moderately acquainted with the Srriptnres, and with the Writings of the *Popiſh Caſuiſts*, but will plainly

ſee

ſee that it hath been the great Deſign of their Divines for a long time, to interpret the Law of God ſo, as Men might *keep their Luſts, and yet keep the Commandments of God, according to the ſenſe they have put upon them.* In ſhort, *Obedience to the Church*, is almoſt with them *The whole Duty of Man.* There are ſome others that came too near them, making ſtrange looſe Interpretations of the Law of God. The precept for *not taking Gods Name in vain*, they ſay is onely to be underſtood againſt *Perjury.* The 4th. Commandement, onely commandeth *the keeping ſuch days holy, as the Church appoints.* Theſe and ſuch like Interpretations ſerve for nothing, but to help a Soul to *preſume*: And indeed this looſe Interpretation of the Law of God, is *neceſſary* to all ſuch, as maintain the *Juſtification of the Soul*, not by the *Righteouſneſs of Chriſt*, but *by a Righteouſneſs of our own*: *And that Man hath a Power in himſelf*, to do *all that God requireth of him*: I ſay it is neceſſary, for thoſe Men to interpret *Gods Law*, *into* a *conſiſtancy with Mans Power*: But let all good Chriſtians that value their Souls, take heed of thoſe *Interpretations.* Let them but Interpret the Commandements, ſo as by

them ſhall be *commanded* and *forbidden whatſoever is commanded and forbidden in the Word of God*, and then they will eaſily diſcern theſe fallacies; and ſo they muſt interpret them, or they cannot conclude, that the Ten Commandements contain the ſum of all that God hath commanded us to do and avoid; for it is moſt certain that the *whole Scripture*, is as much the *Revealed Will of God* as the *Ten Commandments*, and hath equal Authority with us. Be acquainted therefore with the Scriptures, and call that *Obedience* and *Holineſs*, which that calleth ſo; and be aſſured that let Men tell you what they will, without that Holineſs, that *Obedience*, *no Man ſhall ſee God.* I have dwelt a little the longer upon this head, becauſe indeed the great miſtakes of Men are upon theſe points, that Men fancy that their caſe is good, that they believe enough, and are holy enough to go to Heaven; nay to plead their Holineſs as a Righteouſneſs in which they ſhall adventure to appear before God.

6. A Sixth Notion which I inſtanced in of this miſchievous tendency: *Is the* Power *of a Prieſt or Miniſter to give Abſolution*: So as if while they live the Miniſter *hath abſolved them*, or if when they come

come to die, they can but *Receive the Sacrement*, be absolved, they conclude their Case is good enough. The *Opinion* is in its *Original perfectly Popish*, but founded on that Text, *Whose Sins soever you remit they are remitted, and whose Sins soever you retain, they are retained*; *John* 20. 23. The words are spoken to Christs Disciples, *upon whom he breathed*, v. 22. *and said, Receive you the Holy Ghost*: then he adds, *Whose Sins soever you remit, they are remitted, and whose Sins soever you retain, they are retained.* And this Power, saith the *Papist*, every *Priest* hath, he deriveth from the *Apostles*, and hath the same Power given to him which Christ gave them: And there is a Tincture of this Doctrine, upon the Spirits of some that are no professed Papists; and I perswade my self, that many less knowing People peniciously rest upon it: I shall therefore a little inlarge upon it.

1. In the first place. *That God onely can forgive Sins, is a Principle so consonant* to *Reason*; and *so abundantly Confirmed in Holy Writ, that certainly none can make the least doubt of it.* Sin is a debt, a debt to the Justice of God; Christ hath taught us to pray with Reference to it: *Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.*

debtors. Now Reaſon tells us, that none can diſcharge a debt, but he onely to whom it is owing; it is an injury done to God, and who can forgive it, but the Perſon that hath received it: So that all the Queſtion can be, Whether *God hath not commiſſionated Miniſters to do it in his Name*, and will not ratifie what they do.

2. Secondly, *It is ſo great a Prerogative of God, ſo great a piece of his Glory, that it is a verry unreaſonable thing for any to think, that God ſhould truſt it out of his hands:* Chriſt indeed (who thought it no Robbery to be *Equal with the Father*, and who had *all Power in Heaven and Earth committed to him*, had Authority on Earth to forgive Sins, but no Creature had ever ſuch a power: It is a piece of the Lords Name, *I, even I, am he* that *blotteth out Tranſgreſſions for my Names ſake:* It is his Glory, which *he will not give unto another.*

3. Thirdly, It cannot be imagined but that our Lord knew well enough, *That if a Power of Forgiving Sins ſhould be intruſted to every Miniſter, many Mens Sins would be remitted expreſly contrary to the whole Tenour of the Goſpel.* They know not who *Believe*, nor who *truly Repent*; they

they can judge but according to *the outward appearance.* Now Thousands may appear to us true Believers, and truly Penitent, that are not so; and so consequently many *Unbelievers*, many *Hypocrites and hard hearted Sinners*, should have their Sins remitted: Besides Ministers are no better then *Elijah*, *Men subject to like passions with other Men*; and out of *Passion* or *Prejudice*, might refuse to *Remit their Sins* who *did truly Believe* and *truly* Repent; and can any Man think that our Lord should commit such a power to those who are so *Fallible*, who are no competent Judges of Persons whom God indeed will Pardon; but might through Ignorance, or through Passion and Corruption, pronounce a *Forgiveness* of Sin, or a not *Forgiveness*, directly contrary to the Will of God? Or will any be so mad as to think that every Minister is Infallible? Or that God will in Heaven confirm what they do upon Earth, directly contrary to the Will of God? The *Papists* indeed contend the *Pope is Infallible*, but is every *Priest so too*? Or can they think that God will confirm his *Errours* contrary to his own Revealed Will, as to those Terms upon which alone he will forgive the Sins of any.

4. It

4. It must therefore be understood onely of a *Declarative Forgiveness*, *Whose Sins soever you shall according to my Will declare Remitted*, *they shall be Remitted*; and *whose Sins soever you shall according to my Revealed Will declare not to be Forgiven*, *they shall not be Forgiven*. Now this Declaration may be either *General* or *Particular*: Generally, every Minister that Preacheth the Gospel, Declareth. *That he who confesseth his Sins and forsaketh them*, *shall have Mercy*: That he who *Believeth shall be Saved* more particularly. If any Christian in any distress, shall ask the Judgment of any Minister, having declared the state of his Soul to him, so as to give him a probable Hope, that he heartily hath repented, and doth truly believe; the Minister may *Declare*, *If these things be true which thou hast told me*, *if indeed thou truly repentest*, *and truly believest in the Lord Jesus Christ*; *God hath Forgiven thine Iniquities*. But the truth of the latter, dependeth on the truth of the former, and it is impossible that any Minister should have any other Power to *Forgive any ones Sins*, *or Authority to declare them to be Forgiven*; for he must not pronounce contrary to the Scripture: and therefore our *Liturgy* says no more,

Then

Then that God hath given Power and Authority to his Miniſters, to declare Remiſſion of Sins to thoſe that truly repent and believe his Holy Goſpel.

5. The Apoſtles had, I cannot ſay *any further Authority, but a further Advantage, for this, than ordinary Miniſters; having a more extraordinary Revelation, a more extraordinary ability to diſcern Spirits.* Without doubt the Apoſtles themſelves were not authorized by Chriſt, to declare to any *Impenitent*, any *Unbelieving Soul, that his or her Sins were forgiven*; for this had been for our Lord to have contradicted himſelf. Indeed the Apoſtles might and did ſee further into Men than any can now do, by reaſon of the *extraordinary Gift of the Holy Ghoſt*; and therefore it immediately is ſaid before, *He breathed upon them*, and ſaid, *Receive* the *Holy Ghoſt*. I know none now to whom Chriſt ſo breatheth upon, and to whom he ſaith, *Receive the Holy Ghoſt*; yet as the *Hebrew Doctors* ſay, *Spiritus Sanctus non ſemper tangit corda Prophetarum*: The Spirit of God did not always touch the the Hearts of the Prophets; the Prophets could not always Prophecy, but onely *when the Spirit* of *Prophecy* came upon them. So though the Apoſtles could ſome-

ſometimes by vertue of that *extraordinary* Gift of *diſcerning Spirits*, diſcern Spirits, yet I do not think they could allways; for if they could, the *Apoſtles* would never have *Baptized Simon Magnus* whom he by and by told, *That he was in the gall of bitterneſs, and bands of iniquity.*

6. This being all can be affirmed of any *Miniſters*, with any *Senſe* or Modeſty, the *Papiſts* in the *Council* of *Trent*, had no ground to Curſe all thoſe that held, *That the Words of Chriſt, Whoſe Sins you remitt, are remitted; are to be underſtood of an Authority to Preach the Goſpel*, or that *the Prieſts Abſolution is not a Judicial but a Miniſterial Act.* Yet this new Doctrine paſſed not thoſe that were aſſembled in that *Popiſh Council* without Contradiction. *Concil.* Trid Seſs. 14. cap. 3. & cap. 9. The *Franciſcan* Divines, told them, That it was the Opinion of *Hierom* and *P. Lombard* and *Bonaventure*, and almoſt all the *School-Men*, That the *Abſolution in the Sacrament of Penance* (as they called it) is but a *Declaration that his Sins are remitted*, and *Pelargus* told them, *That that Text, Whoſe Sins you remit, are remitted*; by the Ancients, is not (as to their Senſe) *limited* to the *Sacrament of Penance*; nay perhaps not by any one of them ſo underſtood:

derstood: Because this Doctrine of the Priests or Ministers *Absolution*, savours much of the *Popish Doctrine*; I will a little shew you what their Doctrine is in the Case. 1. *They hold* that *Original Sin* is *washed away in Baptism*; then Children are regenerated and justified. 2. But in regard *that after Baptisme, Men sin many times a day*, they have therefore devised *a Sacrament of Penance* (as they call it) *The matter of which they make to be Contrition, Confession and Satisfaction*; the Minister of it to be a *Priest* good or bad; for they determine that a Priest *guilty of Mortal Sin, may administer this Sacrament*; the vertue of which they say, doth not depend upon the quality of the *Priest*, but the *Character of his Ordination. Contrition*, indeed, *they make an hearty sorrow for Sin*: *Confession* they say is not onely necessary in *private to God*, but in *the Ears of the Priest*; for, say they, *how can he absolve and remit Sins, if he doth not know them*; *and that in their Circumstances*: So that their Doctrine of the necessity of *Auricular Confession* (upon which account they all have their *Confessors*) depends upon this Doctrine of the *Priests Absolution*, all the pretended necessity of it is in order to the receiving that benefit.

fit. Then they further say, *That God doth onely Pardon the Eternal guilt of Sin; and Christ hath onely satisfied for that: So that for the removal of Temporary Punishments, there must be also Satisfaction.* Hence their Priests have power to appoint People *Pilgrimages*, *Building of Churches*, *Paying sums of Money for Satisfaction.* This *Penance* being undergone, they do declare that any *Priest* (being appointed thereto by the Church) may in ordinary Causes, not onely *Declaratively*, but *Judicially*, *Pardon and Absolve the Sinner*: but if an higher *Priest*, a *Bishop*, *or the Pope*, *hath reserved some Cases in which he or they alone will have power to Absolve*, *and to appoint to Penances and Satisfactions*, *in those*, *they onely can do it the more private*, *Priests cannot:* This is their Doctrine. *Protestants* now say, that *God alone can forgive Sins*, but by his *Ministers*, in the Preaching of the Gospel, he doth declare a Mans Sins are forgiven, who have a true *Contrition*, who *truly repent*, *and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ*, fully forgive them; so that he expecteth no *further Satisfaction* for the Sinner, than that which was long since given by the Blood of Christ, who hath *Trod the Wine-press of his Fathers Wrath alone*,

alone, and finished all that Work: They say indeed, that *Confession of Sins in most causes is sufficient to God alone*: It is he alone that can forgive them. In some Causes indeed a more open *Confession* is necessary: 1. *When the Church hath been publikely Scandilized*, not that this is necessary in order *to Gods Pardon*, but as an *Act of Obedience to Gods Will*; and for a more *Comfortable Brotherly Communion*, and the Churches Satisfaction; that the Person ought not to be longer kept out of its Communion. 2. They say further, *That in the case of great Horrors of Conscience and Terrors upon Peoples Spirits*, it may be of great advantage to particular Christians under such Terrors, to *confess some particular* Sins unto their *Judicious Brethren*, or unto their *Faithful Ministers*, but not in order to their *Pardon of them*, but in *order to their Prayer to God for them, and offering words in season unto them that are weary*; and being more knowing and mighty in the Scriptures than they are, from the Scriptures, declaring the *Will of God* in their case, *comforting them*, if their case will bear comfort from the Word of God, or otherwise advising them, what to do according to the Will of God, that they may

receive true and ſolid comfort and Peace.

They do alſo further ſay, that *Satisfaction where any hath wronged another, is neceſſary, if in our Power*, as in Caſes of *Theft*, &c. but for any neceſſity of any other *Confeſſion*, or *Satisfaction*, in order to *Gods Forgiveneſs* of the Sin; they do not underſtand it, nor believe it: And for *Judicial Abſolution*, they ſay it is *Gods alone Act*, and that all that *the Miniſter can do*, is to declare *the Will of God to* People in caſe they do truly Repent and Believe, that *God hath, doth, and will, forgive them* freely for Chriſts ſake: In the mean time they do not deny but God may concurr with the Miniſter, as his *Ordinance, giving a ſenſe of the Remiſſion of Sins*, (which Remiſſion was before given them upon their Repentance and believing in Truth) to them, while the Miniſter faithfully declareth the Will of God, for the pardoning ſuch as truly Repent and Believe; but if any perſon be *Abſolved* by a Miniſter, hath cheated him, and pretended Repentance and true Faith, having no ſuch thing his heart: Or if any Miniſter hath either through *Ignorance* or *Paſſion*, declared a Perſons *Sins forgiven*, whoſe Sins (while he is in thoſe Circumſtances) God hath

ſaid

said he will not forgive, he may have cheated his own Soul, or the *Minister* may have cheated him, but *God is not mocked*, his sins remain, notwithstanding his pretended *Absolution*. God dispenseth out the *Grace of Forgiveness*, not according to the *Ignorance* and Passions of Men, but according to the Rules of Holy Scripture, which is the Revelation of his *Divine Will*. 2. Trust not therefore to any such vain Imaginations, no nor to the *Receiving of the Sacrament*, either in thy *life time* or at *thy death*: That the *Lords Supper* is an Ordinance of God, by which God doth *signify* and seal the Remission of Sins and Eternal Life, by the commemoration of Christs death to such as truly repent, and believe, is out of question, but that God in that Ordinance doth give *Remission of Sins*; or hath appointed it, so *signifie, seal, or convey*, the pardon of Sin to any unbelieving Impenitent Soul, is a very great Errour. Such Persons may *Eat* and *Drink* there, but it can be nothing but *Judgment* and *Condemnation*. This hath made me frequently admire at some persons fondness of that *Holy Ordinance*, *when they apprehend themselves in danger of Death*, who never made Conscience of it in the time of their *Health*

and *Life*; especially considering that it cannot be administred in a right order, *viz.* In the Communion of the Church, *where many who are joyned in one body, eat of that one bread*: Upon which all Protestant Churches reject private Administrations of that *Institution* and upon just grounds. *Christ first gave* it to the 12, (at least to 11 of them) we never read the Apostles Examples or Directions, to or of any such Administrations upon this Account, unless some particular Persons that have had long and *lingring Sicknesses*, and of that nature as have not influenced their head; nor so indispos'd them, but their minds could attend to the Action; some of which I have known desiring a competent number of the Church with them, privately to partake in the Ordinance, from the publick Participation of which they have been long hindred. I do not know that I ever knew any judicious Christian so much as desire such an Administration, but many others I have; which makes me think some more Ignorant People rest upon it, and trust to it: We know the Popish Notion of it, and what a stir they make with the *Host*, carrying it about in great state to *dying Persons*: And I fear a tang of their Doctrine, yet sticks in the minds of many

many who are professed Protestants. We know what a trade the Papist make of their Doctrines of *Auricular Confession*; *Satisfactions*, *and Private Masses*, *Celebrated for the living and the dead*: and were it not for the gain came into their Purses by them, they could not be so fond of such absurd Opinions and Practices. But Christians take heed of these Notions, which tend to nothing, but to nourish *Presumption* in your Souls; and that you may take heed of them, let me mind you of 2 Passages of our Saviours, *Mark* 4. 24. *Take heed what you hear*, and *Luk.* 8. 18. *Take heed how you hear*, *Take heed how you hear*; hear as those noble *Bereans*, Acts 17. 10, 11. *They received the Word with readiness of Mind*, and *searched the Scriptures whether those things were so*, yet St *Paul* himself was the Preacher; and good Reason, for the same *Paul* hath commanded, *That if he*, *or an Angel from Heaven*, *should bring any other Doctrine then what they had received*, what was according to the Gospel, *they should be Accursed*, *Gal* 1. 8. in doing this you will *take heed what you hear*, and whom you hear too. The Influence of Notions upon the Mind is very great; our *Hopes* will be built upon the *Notions* which we receive: Take heed there-

fore what Notions you receive, see them solidly founded in and proved by the Word of God; be assured else there *is no light in them.*

7. A Seventh Notion I shall but name (for it is perfectly Popish) *concerning a Satisfaction for Sin after this life* by *Purgatory*, out of which too men may get by the Prayers of the *Saints*, or by Masses said for them, or by an *Indulgence* or *Pardon.* This is that which they say, *That if any die in Venial Sin*, or under the *debt of Punishment when the guilt is acquitted*; that is when the Priest hath *Absolved them*, but they have not *performed the Penance* and given the *Satisfaction* which the *Priest hath enjoyned*; all such go not into Heaven, but go into a place they know not where, which they call *Purgatory*; where till they come out (which also shall be they know not when, for they are not agreed in the time of Souls lying there) *they shall be Tormented* (they know not how) some say by a *material Fire*, some say by a *metaphorical Fire*, some say by *Water* and *Fire too*; but by giving so much money for so many *Masses*, or by a *Pardon from the Pope*, or many other ways, they may get out sooner. And this Doctrine doubtless destroyeth thousands of Souls amongst them; they love

love their *Lusts* better than their *Moneys*, and venture to live and die in their sinful Courses, and then bequeath a good part of their Estates for *saying Masses*, &c. to get them out of *Purgatory*, when alas poor wretches! they are in the *bottomless Pit* from which is no *Redemption* for ever. But it is enough to have named these horrible things; this Ridiculous Fire serves now for nothing but to keep the *Popes Kitchin warm*, and the *Priests pot boyling*, and to damn poor silly Papists by Presumption; it hardly hurteth a very ordinary Protestants Conscience. But I shall enlarge no further upon this first Direction, for avoiding a *Temptation* to *Presumption*, by taking heed of *Notions* which lead the Soul right on upon it, and indeed serve for little else. I proceed to a Second Direction.

CHAP. VI.

Further Directions for the avoiding Presumption, considering the greatness of the guilt, of the danger, how many miscary by it.

it. To be possessed of the difficulty of being Saved, the paucity of those who shall be saved. Self Examination, Rules for it. Takeing heed of Sinning against Light. Prayer to God Working out our Salvation with Fear.

2. *Possess your Souls* Secondly (if you would avoid this great Temptation) with the *greatness of Sin, and danger of Presumption, and the great multitudes which split eternally on this Rock.* Here are three things offered to your Consideration,

1. *The greatness of the Sin of Presumption.* This will be understood partly by considering the *Nature* of it, partly by considering the *Revelation of Gods wraih against it*, as to the *Nature of it.* 1. *It Robbeth God of the Glory of his Justice*, it indeed seemeth to give God the honour of his *Goodness* and *Mercy*, but it makes him an *Idol of Mercy*, and despoileth him of his *Justice*, and *Purity*, and *Holiness*: God indeed is *Gracious and Merciful*; but he is also a God of *purer Eyes* than to behold Iniquity: a God *before whom Sinners*

Sinners shall not stand in Judgment; a God *that cannot clear the Guilty*. Now that Soul that goes on in its *sinful Courses*, and yet hopes to find *Favour with God*, *and to go to Heaven* at last, doth think that God is not so *holy* and *pure a God* as indeed he is, or that he is not so *Just* as he is; either that he hath not *Power* to be Revenged upon Sinners, or not so just a Will and steady a resolution to be revenged upon such as go on in their Courses of Ungodliness, as indeed he hath. Now consider with they self how great a sin it must be, either to deny the *Purity and Holiness of God*, or the *Power and Justice of God*: The Presumptuous Sinner saith, God is not of so pure Eyes, but he can abide Iniquity; a Sinner may dwell in his sight: whereas God could not be God if he could not be *Just*, or not be *Holy* and *Pure*: Holiness is a piece of Gods Glory, he is not only *Glorious* in *Majesty*, but he is also *Glorious in Holiness*. 2. And as the *Justice* and *Purity* of God is Impeached by Presumption, so his *Truth is also Impeached*: The Presumptuous Sinner doth in effect say, The *Scripture* is a *Lie* and a *Romance*: for the language of his heart is directly contrary to the language of Scripture, that saith, such

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and ſuch *Sinners* ſhall never enter into the Kingdom of God, but ſhall *have their portion in the Lake which burneth with Fire and Brimſtone*: He ſaith I am ſuch a one, yet I ſhall enter into the Kingdom of God, I ſhall not have my portion in the Lake which burneth with Fire and Brimſtone. What is this but either to deny the Scriptures to be the Word of God, or to deny that which is contained in them to be truth; and ſo to make God a liar; who is a God that cannot lie? Judge you how great an Iniquity this muſt be. And if the Impeachment of a Mans truth be counted ſuch a violation of his honour, that he knoweth not how to put it up, but is ready to revenge it with a Stab; what ſhall God do, who cannot lie? So that three eminent Attributes of God, *Purity, Juſtice, and Truth*, are all of them *queſtioned, impeached, or denyed*, by the Preſumption of a Sinner. And *Preſumption* is not only a Tranſgreſſion of the Law of God, but containeth in it a ſecret *Impugning* of the *Divine Nature*; and transformeth God into a being that is not *Pure* and *Holy*, at leaſt not ſo Pure and Holy, but it can abide *Sin* well enough, that either cannot or will not be revenged upon Sinners; that can declare one thing and do another.

2. Second-

2. Secondly, *The magnitude of any Sin is well taken and judged, from the Revelation of Divine Wrath against it.* And it is but just and equal to judge that the greatest Sin, against which God doth most severely reveal his Wrath. As to this we shall need look no further then the Text, which I have made the foundation of this Discourse, *Deut.* 29. It is the Presumptuous Sinner that is spoken of, *v.* 19. That *heareth the* words of *the Law*, and the *words of the Curse annexed* to the violation of the Law, and yet *blesseth himself in his heart, and saith, I shall have peace, though I walk in the Imagination of my Heart, and add drunkenness to thirst.* Now what shall the Righteous God do to such a Man? *v.* 20. *The Lord will not spare him, but then the Anger of the Lord and his Jealousy shall smoke against that Man; and all the Curses that are written in this Book shall be upon him; and the Lord shall blot out his name from under Heaven,* v. 21. *And the Lord shall seperate him to Evil out of all the Tribes of Israel, according to all the Curses of the Covenant that are written in this Book of the Law.* What is possible to be added to that Commination? What can be more severely spoken? So as if we may judge of the greatness of

a Sin, by the greatneſs of the Curſes that are annexed to him that committeth it, we have all the reaſon imaginable to judge *Preſumption* one of the greateſt degrees of ſinning, by which it is poſſible that a Sinner ſhould provoke God.

2. A Second thing which I offered to your conſideration was, *the danger of Preſumption, as to theſe things*; *Preſumptions* (as your reaſon will tell you in other things) are very dangerous in three Caſes; and ſuch all wiſe Men will take heed of.

1. Where the *Good expected*, or the *Evil we expect an immunity from, are of a very high and important Nature*: A Man may venture to Preſume of a *Victory* in a Caſe at Law, where if he be overthrown he may loſe 40, 50, 100 *l.* in ſuch Caſes he will ſay *he knows the worſt of it*, if he be miſtaken it is but a money matter, it is but the loſs of ſuch and ſuch a ſum of money; but a man will not do ſo where his *life is in danger*; he will there look for ſufficient grounds to hope he ſhall eſcape his *Enemies charge*: Chriſtian, the concern we are ſpeaking of, is not the concern of thy Eſtate, 'tis not the concern of thy *Life*, it is the concern of thy *Body and Soul to all Eternity*; it becomes thee as thou art a Reaſonable Crea-

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ture here, to beware of preſuming, or building upon the ſand of inſufficient grounds. Thy Soul, thy Eternal well or ill Being, is the concern of thy hopes here, if they be *well bottomed* thou art happy for ever, if they be *ill bottomed* thou art undone for ever: It is not trifling, nor flattering thy ſelf here, Eternity depends upon it; thou art a Creature ordained to an Eternity of Bliſs or Miſery; it is about this thy hopes is exerciſed: O Conſider of what import this good or evil is.

2. Preſumptions are very pernicious, *when a due care might in time be taken to prevent the Evil, or obtain the Good: Only Preſumption of the needleſſneſs of care hindreth.* In Law *Preſumptions* are never admitted for proof, if more poſitive proof can be had; a man in pleading might ſpeak for a Sinner, building upon *Preſumptuous Hopes*, if he could come to no other; but this is not the Caſe of any Soul: We indeed cannot come to one Soul in our Congregations, and ſay to him, or to her, *Thou art Elected* and *ſhalt certainly be ſaved*; but neither can we come to any one Soul and ſay, *Thou art a Reprobate and ſhalt certainly be damned*: Any Soul for ought we know, lies fair for Heaven

Heaven (especially such I mean as are within the bosome of the Church, and in whose streets Christ is Preached. We indeed, considering the courses of Sin in which many live, can come to them, and tell them, *In this state wherein you live at present*, and according to *that course of life which you at present follow, you can have no good hope that God hath forgiven your Sins, or that you shall ever come into the Kingdom of God*: But what you may do, what change may be made in your hearts, what alteration or reformation in your life, that we cannot tell: Now Men and Womens *Presumptions* hinder the use of those means, by which they might make their Calling and Election sure; they say, They have *their life in their hands, therefore they are not grieved* (as the Prophet speaketh) though in another case, *Isaiah* 57. 10. They say with the Church of *Laodicea*, Rev. 3. 17. *That they have need of nothing*, when in the mean time they are *Wretched, and Miserable, and Poor, and Blind, and Naked*; and therefore it is, they look no further after the Eternal Concerns of their Souls: they do not *buy of Christ Gold tryed in the fire, that they may be rich, and white Rayment, that they may be Cloathed, and that*

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the shame of their Nakedness may not appear.

3. Thirdly, those presumptions are dangerous, *which lead into a destructive error, which cannot be amended when discovered.* If a man hopes without ground that he may get an Estate by some way, by which it is not to be got; he may by his presumption be a loser of time, and a loser in some part of his Estate: but yet when he seeth his error he may correct it, he may *redeem his time*, he may *recover his Estate.* But to *presume* for a good, as to which, if our expectations fail, they fail for ever; and of a *deliverance* or *immunity* from some *evil*, wherein if our expectations fail, we shall be irrecoverably immerced in that evil. This no Wise Man will do. It is true in our present case it is not so: While there is life there is hope, That man or Woman that hath hatched up presumptuous hopes that he is in favour with God, that his Sins are pardoned, and he Eternally saved, may examine the grounds of his hopes; if he finds them insufficient, he may acquit them, and use means to *obtain a good hope through Grace.* But *dying presumptions*, they are desperate; for saith *Solomon*, Eccles. 9. 10. *There is no device, no work, no knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither we are going.* Psal. 49. 8. *For the Redemption of*

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the Soul is precious, and it ceaſeth for ever. As the Soul leaves the Body, ſo it ſhall be with it as to Eternity. It was a deſperate preſumption of the *fooliſh Virgins* to come knocking and crying, *Lord open to us, when the door was ſhut*, Matth. 25. and for thoſe mentioned, *Matth.* 7. 12. that will in the Great Day ſay unto him, *Lord, Lord, have we not prophecyed in thy Name, and in thy Name have caſt out Devils, and in thy Name done many wonderful works?* To whom he will ſay, v. 13. *I never knew you, depart from me you workers of Iniquity.* Take heed of carrying on preſumptuous hopes to a dying hour.

3. The Third Thing which I under this Head offered to *your Conſideration*, was the *multitude of theſe Souls* that (ſo far as we can judge) *ſplit upon this Rock.* It is a great piece of Wiſdom to take warning by the harms of others. The Scripture tells us, that, *Without Faith and Holineſs none ſhall ſee God.* Heb. 12. 14. It telleth us 21. *Rev.* 8. *That the fearful, and the unbelieving, and the abominable, the murderers, and the whoremongers: and ſorcerers, and idolaters; and all liars, ſhall have their part in the Lake which burns with fire and Brimſtone; which is the ſecond Death.* It ſaith, 1 Cor. 6. 9. *Know you not, that the unrighteous ſhall not inherit*

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the Kingdom of God. Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate persons, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall ever enter into the Kingdom of God. We own these Scriptures to be the Word of God, we see, we hear of persons dying daily, who we know lived in these, some of these Sins, and never gave any visible Signs of Repentance and Reformation. What did they die without hope? No they hoped to be Saved, and it may be died with Confidence they should be Saved. What was, what could be the ground of their hope, but either *God made them*, and they hope he will not destroy them: Or *Christ dyed for all.* Or though they had their failngs, yet *they have done such or such good works.* Or *they were Members of the Church*: Or *they have asked God Pardon.* Or they say they are sorry for their Sins, and have been *absolved*, and *received the Sacrament*, or some such things as these? O dreadful! Is Eternity to be adventured in this Manner? Presumption (Sirs) slayeth its *Ten thousands.* Oh that it might not slay any Soul that heareth me this day. Let this be a Second piece of Advice, in order to the avoiding this Rock.

3. Thirdly, *Possess your Souls of the Difficulty*

culty of getting to Heaven, and the small number of those that shall be Saved. I say first the *Difficulty of getting into Heaven.* You have it confirmed to you from him who came from Heaven, from the Bosom of his Father, on purpose to reveal his Fathers Will in the Case; *Matth. 7. 14. Strait is the Gate and narrow is the way that leadeth to Eternal Life, and few there be that find it.* Oh what an easie thing do *Papists* make it to get to Heaven? What an easie thing do some others make it too? But whoever makes it easie, makes God a Lyar. Christ hath said, *Strait is the Gate, and narrow is the way.* If being *Baptized*, *If Confessing Sins* in the *Ears of the Priest*, *and taking Absolution from him*, if living all your Life in Sensual Satifactions, then crying, *Lord Receive my Soul*, when you die, and Receiving the Sacrament, will bring men to Heaven, Oh what an easie thing it is to be Saved? But if a man must *Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ*, if he must deny himself, and *take up the Cross* and *follow Christ*, if he must *keep under his body* and *bring it in subjection to his Spirit*; and also bring his Spirit in subjection *to the Will of God.* If he must *forget what is behind* (as St. *Paul* did) and press on *to what is before, unto the price of the high Calling*; if he must *Watch* and *Pray*,

Pray, and *Strive* and *Fight*, and *give all diligence to make his Calling and Election sure*, then Sirs it is no *easie thing*. Christ judged it no easie thing, St. *Paul* judged not so, and is it not ridiculous for any to think that God should send his own Son to die an accursed Death, to purchase an atonement and reconciliation with God; that he should *sweat drops of Blood* and powre out his Blood on the Cross, and be put to cry out, *My God, My God, Why hast thou forsaken me?* and after this a Sinner living in the Church, and knowing and hearing of this, should think it so easie a thing to get into favour with God, and obtain the Application of this Blood for the pardon of Sin, and so great a mercy as Eternal Life. Brethren let none deceive you, it is either no *easy thing* to get to Heaven, or the *Scriptures* are not to be believed, nor Christ to be believed, that Christ in whom we alone hope for Salvation; those *Scriptures* which we own as the *Revelation of the Will of God* to us concerning our Salvation, and all those holy servants of God before us, who spent their time in *Fastings*, *Watchings*, *Prayers*, *Mortifying* their Members, and in all Examples of an Holy Life, and in the constant owning and profession of the Truth unto death; were deceived and mistaken, and lived and died as fools. Let men write

and talk what they will, poſſeſs your Souls of the *Difficulty* of being Saved, you will find them to be at laſt in poſſeſſion of a great and uſeful Truth.

2. Yea and Secondly, Poſſeſs your ſelves of the Truth of that which you have upon the ſame credit, *That there are but few that ſhall be Saved*; Matth. 7. 14. One pronounced that Queſtion to our Saviour, Luke 13. 23. *Lord are there few that ſhall be ſaved?* He replied unto them, v. 24. *Strive to enter in at the Strait Gate, for many I ſay unto you will ſeek to enter in, and ſhall not be able.* It is a Truth that there are but few will be ſaved, and he who obſerveth what conditions of Salvation the Scripture hath made, and conſidereth the lives of moſt, will ſee it muſt be true. But our Saviour in that anſwer teacheth us the true uſe we ought to make of that Notion: Not to conclude that *we ſhall not*. For who hath aſcended into Heaven, to bring us news from thence whoſe Names are or are not written in the Book of Life? Or who can tell who will repent and believe in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt? 2. Not to *deaden us to Duty*; and make us ſay then it is in vain for us to do any thing, for *we ſhall not be ſaved, do we what we will* (no Scripture ſaith ſo) but to quicken us, if we be in a ſtate of *Ignorance*, *Unbelief* and *Impenitency*,

to

to Strive to enter in, to give diligence to make our Calling and *Election sure.* For tho it be true, That inlight matters that are of no great concernment, *Difficulty* discourageth indeavours, yet in things that we cannot be without and be happy, where our well being is highly concerned, *Difficulties* (especially not appearing to us insuperable) instead of deadening, quicken us to the use of utmost Indeavours. Live therefore in the daily view and apprehension of the Difficulty of getting to Heaven, and under the daily thoughts of what God hath revealed, That there are but few that shall be saved.

4. Fourthly, *Be frequent in the Examination of the grounds of your hope, and in the Examination have a care that your grounds have a Scripture Foundation*; and that as to your *Grounds from Holiness, you conclude rather from your affections than your actions*; and if at all from *your actions*, from the *course of them*, not *from any single acts*; *and lay more stress upon the Covenant of Grace, and the application of your souls unto it, than either upon your affections or actions.* Here is a great deal put together in this one Direction, Let me shortly discourse the several parts of it: 1. I say first be much in *Examining the grounds of your hopes.* Indeed I should have first said, *Be much in whetting upon your Souls*

the belief of your Eternal Existence: It is our want of belief of this, or attendance to the thoughts of this, which makes Men and Women so careless as to the looking after it. We had need have it rung in our Ears every Morning and Evening, Sir, *Remember you are going to Eternity.* If Men and Women could be brought to that pass, that like that Ancient we read of, where-ever they are, whatever they are doing, they should think they hear the Sound of the *Last Trumpet* and the Voice, *Arise you dead and come to Judgment*, they would be oftner entring into and communing with their own Hearts about the Grounds and Reason of their Hopes to live with God in a Blessed Eternity, when they shall no longer live in the World. But O we do not think of Eternity, we do not believe Eternity so fixedly and steadily as we should. God commanded under the Law by *Moses*, Deut. 6. 6,7. *That the words which the Lord did command them, should be in their hearts, that they should diligently teach them to their Children, that they should talk of them when they sate in the house, and when they walked by the way, when they lay down, and when they rose up; that they should bind them as a sign upon their hand, and they should be as frontlets betwixt their eyes, and they should be written upon their Posts and upon their*

their Gates. What God commanded as to his *Law*, I would have done as to every one of our *Eternal State.* I would have it written upon our Hearts, that *we are going to Eternity*, I would have you *teach it to your Children*, talk of it when you sit by your *Fire-sides*, when you go out, when you come in, when you lie down, when you rise up. I would have, *Remember Eternity*, wrote upon the walls of your Parlours and of your *Bed-Chambers.* I would have it always *before your eyes*; surely then your hearts would be often saying, *To what Eternity am I going?* Am I going to *Eternal Happiness* or to *Eternal Torments?* To the place where I shall *Weep*, and grieve, and vex no more, or to the place where will be nothing else, but *Weeping*, and *Wailing*, *and gnashing of Teeth*, *and that for evermore?* And you would not rest in every slighty return your deceitful hearts should make, flattering you with hopes of Heaven; but you would say, *My Soul* do not thou deceive me, upon what grounds doest thou tell me it shall be well with me for ever? We never think that we are sure enough of a *Debt* or a *little Estate*; why should we trust in slighty seeming security for an Eternal Interest? And be assured of this, no grounds of Hope are

worth any thing, but such as *plain Scripture justifieth*: *Eternal Life is the Gift of God*, the Scripture tells so, and we should never have thought of Eternity but for the Revelation of it in Scripture; it is therefore given according to *Scripture Revelation* and no otherwise. It is given by Christ to those that the *Father hath given him*, Joh. 17. 2. We cannot search the Book of God to see the Names of those the Father hath given him, but he hath told us who are given him; *John* 10. 27. *My Sheep hear my voice, and follow me, and I give unto them Eternal Life, and they shall never perish.* Thou hast no ground to hope for Eternal Life, but from thy *hearing* (hearing and obeying) the *voice of Christ*, and thy *following of him*; but so many are our failings, such are our short and imperfect walkings, that here a good Christian may have his doubts and fears, whether he heareth Christs voice and so followeth him, that he may cherish hopes in himself, that he is one to whom Christ will give Eternal Life: To guide you therefore, I say,

1. *Do not take up your hopes from single Actions, but from a continued Course of Actions.* The *Philosopher* tells us, That *single* Acts will never denominate a Man *Vertuous*,

tuous, nor yet *Vicious*: He is not a *Drunkard*, that is once overtaken with drink, but he that makes a trade of it; he is not a *just Man* that now and then doth a just Action, but he that in his whole Course giveth to every one his due; nor is he an *holy Man*, that sometimes doth *good Actions*, *Hears*, *Prayeth*; but that Man that hath Regard to all Gods Commandements, and that at all times, in all Places, Companies, *&c.* There is none so good but doth some things ill (who liveth and sinneth not?) Nor are there many to be found so bad, but do somthings good: *Herod* heard *John the Baptist gladly, and he did many things*, Mark 6. 20. That is the holy Man, that in the whole Course of his Life, applyeth himself to the Pleasing of God, enquiring what the good Will of God is, and setting himself to do it, and not turning aside there-from, though by some *Passions*, *Corruptions*, *Temptations*, &c. he may sometimes be turned out of his way.

2. Secondly, Lay more stress upon your *Affections than upon your Actions*, indeed they must *Justifie* and *Legitimate your Actions*. *Ends and Affections* make up the *form of Holiness*, and distinguish it from the good Works of the Heathens; which

of

Auguſtine rightly called *Gay* and *Splendid Sinnings*. The Law is, *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart*: Let a Man do what he will, if it be not out of love to God, out of a deſire to pleaſe him, and a fear to offend him, it is no holineſs, it is but *Oſtentation*, or *Self-ſeeking*, or meer *Moral Vertue*. Let a Man fail in his *Action*, whether through *Infirmity*, or *Temptation*, yet if his deſire hath been towards God, if his Hearts Affections have been right, he is accepted of God; do not therefore in your *Examination of this ground of your Hope*, ſo much truſt to what you find you have done for God and in Obedience to his Will, as from what *Principle* it hath been done, *to what end*, with what *Affection*, *&c.* Say to your Souls, I have been an Hearer of Sermons, one that has uſed to Read, to Pray; but what hath been my Principle in it? Hath it been the fear of God? The love of God? Obeying the Will of God? Hath my end in it been the glorifying of God? This will try your *Hopes* from your Holineſs, whether they be well grounded or no.

3. I added Thirdly, When you have done all, you will ſee reaſon to *lay more ſtreſs upon the Covenant of Redemption and Grace, than ever upon your Affections, or Actions*;

Actions; *yet not seperated from the one, or the other, but in conjunction with them.* I will put the Case, that you, or I, were in secret examining our selves, *What hope we have that God had Pardoned our Sins, and that when we die we should go to Heaven*? We reflect upon our lives, suppose the better part of our lives, and we find that although in many things we have failed, yet in the general course of our Actions, we have endeavoured to do in all Circumstances what God hath commanded us; well but yet our *Hearts* tells us, nay the Scriptures tells us, that if what we have done, hath not been done out of *love to God*, out of a *desire to obey him*, it is *all nothing*. It may be we have asked our hearts this question, and they reply to us, that it hath been the command of God, and a will and a desire to please God, that hath carried us out generally to our Actions; but yet we shall find so much mixture of *self-seeking*, so much want of *Affection* at sometimes; that when we have done all, if it were not for a Covenant of *Grace* and *Redemption*, we were undone. I can never enough mind you of the last words of *David*, 2 *Sam.* 23. 4, 5. *v.* 3. he tells you what God had said to him, *The God of Israel said, the Rock of*

of Iſrael ſpake unto me: He that Ruleth over Men muſt be juſt, Ruling in the Fear of God, as the light of the Morning when the Sun riſeth, a Morning without Clouds, as the tender Graſs, ſpringing out of the Earth by clear ſhining after Rain: So far he conſidereth now his Rule, now he reflects on himſelf, and findeth that he had come ſhort of this, he had not been *juſt* in the matters of *Uriah* and *Bathſheba*, nor in many other things; *Where is then this good Mans hope?* mark v. 5. *Although my Houſe be not ſo with God, yet he hath made me an everlaſting Covenant, ordered in all things, and ſure; for this is all my Salvation, and all my deſire, although he maketh it not to grow.* The God of Heaven hath ſaid to every one of us, the Rock of our Salvation, *He that believeth, is not condemned; he hath* ſaid, *My Sheep hear my Voice, and follow me, and I give them Eternal Life.* But I have been full of unbelief, I have been deaf to many a voice of Chriſt, in many things I have ſinned, and come ſhort of the Glory of God: I have trodden many a ſtep a-wry, I hope my general aim hath been right; but I have halted and trodon ſhort, and come infinitely ſhort of my Rule; *My Heart, my ways have not bin ſo with God.* Where's a good Chriſti-

Christians hope then? but in this, *The Lord hath made with the Son of his love an Everlasting Covenant, well ordered and sure in all things*; a Covenant that in consideration of the *Satisfaction* which he hath paid to his Fathers Justice, the price which he hath paid, his *Righteousness* shall be reckoned for *Righteousness* to every Soul, that upon the offer of the Gospel shall receive him, close with him, accept him, and in sincerity of Heart shall give up himself to the *Obedience* of his Will; for this is every good Mans *Salvation*: and when we have done all here, the stress of our *Hopes* must lie. Yet here is no *ground for Hope* without *Action*, true Affections towards God, conjoined with sincere Actions. The *Covenant of Grace* will not relieve one ill principled and loose walking Christian, tho it be the onely relief for a *Sincere Christian*, that is sensible of his *imperfect walking* with God.

5. Fifthly, If you would take heed of *Presumption*, *you must take heed of wilful sinning against Light*; doing any thing which your Conscience telleth you, you ought not to do. The Nature of Man is biassed to prophesie and promise good to himself; none but an *Atheistical*, *Sleepy*, *Secure* Soul, that never thinks of Heaven or Hell, or what shall become of

of him after this Life, but maintaineth ſome ſecret hopes in one degree or another, that he is in the Favour of God, that his ſins are Pardoned, and that he ſhall be Eternally Saved. Now theſe hopes in the heart of a wilful ſinner, that goeth on in a courſe of known Sin, can be but Preſumptions; and therefore every Soul that thus liveth and walketh, muſt either be a *Preſumptuous Perſon*, or one that *deſpaireth*; for he muſt either have *ſome Hope*, or *no Hope*: if he hath *no Hope at all*, it is either becauſe he is under *Deſpair*, or becauſe he is an *Atheiſt*, and never mindeth and regardeth any thing but what he ſhould *Eat* or *Drink* and *Put on*, and how his Poſterity ſhall live when he is dead: If he hath *any Hope*, it can be no other then a *Preſumptuous Hope*; for he hath not one line in Scripture to juſtify it. *There is no peace to the Wicked* (ſaith God) ſo that without cleanſing our ways, and taking heed thereto, according to the Word of God, there is no avoiding the guilt of *Atheiſm*, *Deſpair*, or *Preſumption*; and this is a very dreadful Meditation, but ſuch as nothing can be truer. We ſee there are but few, very few that deſpair; ſo that as *Solomon* ſaith, *Proſperity ſlayeth the Fool*: ſo it is either *Atheiſm* and a Careleſneſs,

ness, as to any consideration of another life, or else *Presumption*, that slayeth the most of those poor Souls which go down into the Pit.

6. Sixthly, *Be much in Prayer to God* to guide you in the examining of your state, and to keep you from taking up with vain Confidences; take the Example of the Man according to Gods own Heart, *Psal.* 129. 23. *Search me O God, and know mine Heart, try me, and know my Thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.* Beg of God to give you that good hope, through grace, which he mentioneth, to beget you to a lively hope, and not to suffer you to please your selves with a *Presumptuous Hope*; that as to your hopes for Eternity, it may not be to you as the Prophet speaketh, *Isaiah* 29. 8. *As when an hungry Man dreameth, and behold he eateth; but he awakes and his Soul is empty; and behold he drinketh, but he awaketh and behold he is faint, and his Soul hath Appetite.*

7. Finally, *Be in the Fear of the Lord all the day long*; the wise Man saith, *Blessed is he that feareth always*; Prov. 28. 14. and we are you know, commanded to *work out our Salvation with Fear and Trem-*

Trembling; Phil. 2. 12. It is true, there is a *ſtate of Love*, that caſteth out *Fear*; *perfect Love caſts out Fear* (ſaith the Apoſtle) and *Paul* tells us *Rom.* 8. *We have not received the ſpirit of bondage again to fear*; but a fear leaſt we ſhould offend God, a *fear* leaſt we ſhould *deceive our own Souls*, is an excellent guard and protection to a Soul: if it riſeth indeed to cauſe a *diſtruſt in God*, or a *deſpair of his Goodneſs*, then it is putrified, then it diſhonoureth God; and ſuch a fear ought not to be endured in a believers Soul: but there is a *Cautious*, *Wary*, *Ingenious*, *Well-regulated Fear*, that well becometh even the beſt Souls, while they are in their ſtate of Corruption and Mortality, and where they are daily incompaſſed with Temptations.

FINIS.